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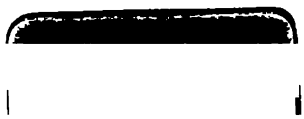

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THE

LORD MAYOR OF LONDON:

OR,

CITY LIFE IN THE LAST CENTURY.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

"By this light I do not think but to be Lord Mayor of London before I die."—*Green's Tu Quoque.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE

LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

BOOK III.

(CONTINUED.)

TRADESCANT.

XIII.

A CARTEL.

THE book-keepers looked up in amazement when Crutchet informed them, as he and Tradescant entered the counting-house, that henceforward Mr. Lorimer would undertake the management of the business in person, and still greater astonishment was manifested by the shopmen and apprentices. Indeed, the announcement would have been received with absolute incredulity by the latter, had not Tradescant confirmed it by remaining for some time in the shop with Crutchet. On proceeding to an inner room attached to the

counting-house reserved for the heads of the establishment, Tradescant found Herbert seated at a table with a bundle of letters before him, which he was docketing and tying up, and, going up to him, said, in a frank and conciliatory tone,

"I beg that all differences may be at an end between us, cousin. I am heartily ashamed of my conduct towards you, and entreat your forgiveness."

"You cannot speak more handsomely, cousin," replied Herbert, warmly grasping the hand held out to him. "Be assured I shall think no more of the past, and trust we may be good friends in future."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Tradescant. "You have set me an example which I am determined to follow. Henceforth I mean to devote myself energetically to business."

"I rejoice to hear you express such sentiments, cousin," said Herbert, "though I confess I did

not expect them. But how has this beneficial change been wrought?"

"Chiefly by your sister Prue," replied Tradescant. "If I become an exemplary character like my father—as I hope I may be—it will be owing to her."

"Yes, Mr. Herbert," cried Crutchet, who had followed his young master into the room, "your sister's a very wonderful young lady. She has accomplished more in a few minutes than I could do in years. It wasn't what she said exactly, but the way in which she said it, that did the business. Mr. Lorimer listened to her as he never would listen to me or to any one else."

"Very true, Crutchet," replied Tradescant. "She struck the right chord, and the response was immediate."

"An infallible proof of her judgment and skill," said Crutchet. "Such is the influence a good wife always exercises over her husband. But no

such influence, I suspect, would have been obtained by Miss Walworth had your proposed union with her taken place."

"Is the match broken off, then?" inquired Herbert.

"Fortunately for both parties, it is so," replied Tradescant. "There was little love on either side. It must be reckoned among my follies that I should have made such a rash engagement, and I must own that you were very badly treated, Herbert, both by the young lady and myself. However, the field is now open to you again if you choose to enter it."

"That is scarcely likely," observed Herbert. "If I felt any liking for the girl it has been effectually cured. She is a coquette, and I have no desire to be jilted a second time."

"Well, sir," said Crutchet to Tradescant, "if you ever contemplate matrimony again—and I think it would be a wise thing—you needn't search far for a wife to suit you."

"Say you so, Crutchet! Where is she to be found?"

Ere an answer could be given the door was opened, and Sir Felix Bland and Mr. Thomas Potter entered the room. Both these gentlemen looked surprised to find Tradescant there. However, they made no remark; but after the ordinary salutations had passed, Sir Felix said:

"Our business is with you, Mr. Herbert Lorimer, and I wish it were of a more agreeable nature. Mr. Potter has waited upon me on the part of his friend Mr. Wilkes to demand an apology for the affront you put upon him in the City Mall yesterday, or—you understand—satisfaction."

"Let me add, sir," said Tom Potter, "that Mr. Wilkes considers he is conferring a favour in according you a meeting, as he does not consider your social position entitles you to cross swords with a gentleman. However, he is willing to waive that point. This is my message, sir,

and you must excuse me for delivering it plainly."

"Mr. Wilkes does me infinite honour, sir," said Herbert, "and as I have no intention of offering the slightest apology, I shall be compelled to put him to the disagreeable necessity of affording me a meeting."

"Very good, sir," replied Potter. "Nothing, then, remains but to fix the time and place."

"Since the duel appears inevitable, Mr. Potter," observed Sir Felix, "all arrangements had better be made without delay."

"By all means, Sir Felix. The weapons to be swords; that I presume is understood. The hour—eight o'clock to-morrow morning, if that will suit you. The place we propose is White Conduit House, Islington. Mr. Wilkes and myself frequent the house; and arrangements shall be made with Mr. Tilbury, the obliging host, for the use of the bowling-green on the occasion."

"The hour and the place will suit us perfectly;

and we are agreed as to the weapons, eh?" said the little alderman, appealing to his principal, who nodded.

"At eight to-morrow morning, then, we shall expect you. I have the honour to wish you good day, gentlemen."

And he was departing, when Tradescant called out, "A word with you before you go, Tom. Do me the favour to mention to our friends that you found me here."

"Certainly, if you desire it, Lorimer. But I don't see that the circumstance will interest them particularly."

"It may divert them to learn that I have taken to business habits."

"Aha! a good joke! And pray when did this business fit seize you?"

"About an hour ago. But it's not a passing whim, as you seem to imagine, but a fixed resolution."

"Whim or not," exclaimed Potter, "I'll bet

you five hundred to five it don't last two days."

Tradescant was about to cry "Done!" but a look from Crutchet checked him.

"Having forsworn betting and gaming, Tom," he said, "I can't take you, but I should most assuredly win."

"I wish anybody else would take the odds," said Potter. "What say you, old gentleman?" he added, glancing at Crutchet.

"I never bet, sir," replied that personage. "It's against my principles. But I'd stake my reputation on Mr. Lorimer's firmness."

"You'll find me here every day, Tom, unless I'm on 'Change, or at Lloyd's," said Tradescant.

"And ready to serve a customer, no doubt! Well, when I want some cloth I'll come to you. I see through your game. You want to re-establish yourself in your father's good graces. Very prudent. If you hold out for a week, you'll deserve to be canonised."

"I mean to go on as I have begun," said Tradescant.

"Reserve these fine speeches for the Lord Mayor," rejoined Tom Potter, with an incredulous laugh. "They won't pass with me. In another week I shall expect to see you again at the Dilettanti Club, the Jockey Club, the cock-pit, the Groom-Porters', Ranelagh, and all your old haunts."

"No you won't. Hark ye, Tom, I mean to sell Regulus. Will you buy him? You shall have him cheap."

"I'll think about it. You play your part uncommonly well, I confess, but you can't impose on me—ha! ha! To-morrow, at eight, with you, gentlemen, at White Conduit House—this day week with you, Lorimer, at the Dilettanti." And bowing to the company, he withdrew.

"I'm sorry your quarrel with Mr. Wilkes could not be adjusted," said Sir Felix to Herbert, as the door closed on Tom Potter; "but as you

would make no apology, I was obliged to let the affair take its course."

"I hope you understand small-sword exercise tolerably well, Herbert," observed Tradescant, "for you'll have to do with a shrewd antagonist in Mr. Wilkes. He is a master of fence."

"That's more than I am," rejoined Herbert, smiling. "However, I'm not afraid of him."

"I'll give you a lesson by-and-by, and teach you a feint or two that may be useful. I only wish I could take your place. With all his proficiency, Wilkes is no match for me. We frequently practise at Angelo's fencing academy in the Haymarket, and I generally have the best of it."

"But you mustn't fight a duel now, sir," cried Crutchet, anxiously.

"Have no fear, Bow Bells. Be the consequences what they may, I must be present at this encounter."

"Then I must go too," said Crutchet.

"What! you can't trust me out of your sight,

eh?" said Tradescant, laughing. "I'll bring Herbert to your house in Aldersgate-street at half-past seven to-morrow morning, Sir Felix."

"Just what I was about to propose," rejoined the little alderman. "We must be punctual as the clock at the bowling-green—a charming place of rendezvous, by-the-by. Any further commands for me, Mr. Herbert?"

"None whatever, Sir Felix. Indeed, I feel I have already trespassed too much on your good nature."

"Don't say a word about it, my dear friend. Enchanted to serve you. I trust to bring you through this affair creditably. As you neither drink nor play, your head is sure to be clear and your hand steady. Still, an hour's practice with Tradescant will do you no harm. That's all I've got to say. Adieu, gentlemen!" And bowing around, he took his departure.

XIV.

WHICH EXHIBITS THE REAL STATE OF THE LORD MAYOR'S FEELINGS TOWARDS HIS SON.

On the evening of the same day, on the return of the Lord Mayor from the Mansion House, Crutchet, who was all impatience to communicate the joyful intelligence of Tradescant's reformation to his lordship, did not wait for any summons, but immediately went up-stairs, and found Sir Gresham in his cabinet, closeted with Candish.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the worthy fellow, as he entered the room, "I've news for you that will gladden your heart. A wonderful change has been accomplished in a few hours. Your son has be-

come a man of business. He has been in the counting-house all day with me—indeed, he is there now—hard at work, sir—hard at work. 'Tis astonishing the capacity he displays. You'll be quite surprised when you come to talk to him. If it wouldn't be troubling you too much, come down now and see him, pray?"

"Not now, Crutchet," replied Sir Gresham. "I am glad to hear what you say of him, and trust this beneficial change may last. But it is a little too early yet to judge. And I have had so many disappointments, that I dare not indulge hopes which may never be realised."

"But this is performance, not promise, sir," cried Crutchet. "You know how averse Mr. Tradescant has always been to business—especially to our business. You know the efforts I have made to conquer his objections, and how unavailing they have been. Well, sir, in order to convince you that he is in earnest in his design to reform, he has got over all his prejudices, and

set resolutely and manfully to work. You must applaud his determination, I am sure, sir."

"I do applaud it, Crutchet," replied the Lord Mayor, "only I am not quite so sanguine as you are. If he perseveres in his present course, he may win back the good opinion he has forfeited. But sudden changes are seldom lasting, and a few days at least must elapse before I shall be able to judge as to his stability of purpose. Meantime, as he has shown an unmistakable disposition to amend, he deserves to be encouraged, and I will therefore readily grant him a further period of probation—say a week. That is all I can do now."

"I must be content, I suppose," sighed Crutchet; "but I will answer for him with my life."

And with a somewhat disappointed look he quitted the room.

"It pains me to treat the kind-hearted fellow thus," observed Sir Gresham, "but unless firmness

is manifested, no permanent effect will be produced."

"My belief is your son is cured, my lord," rejoined Candish; "but in order to remove all doubts from your mind, I will put his firmness to the proof, and you shall see how he stands it."

"Do so," replied the Lord Mayor. "Yet don't try him too severely. I long to forgive him. But prudence counsels me to forbear. The impression must be deepened, or it will be as quickly effaced as made. What surprises me most is the suddenness of the cure—if cure it be. I cannot conceive how it has been effected."

"I will tell you how it has been accomplished, my lord. Your strong manifestation of displeasure prepared the way, but the change was wrought by your niece. This your son himself frankly admitted."

"Then he is under great obligations to her. The more I see of Prue the better I like her, and

what you now tell me raises her still higher in my estimation. Ah! if Tradescant would but choose a good-hearted, sensible girl like this for a wife, I should have some confidence in his future happiness and respectability."

"Such an event is not altogether improbable," said Candish. "Is your lordship aware that her brother Herbert has got an affair of honour on his hands with Mr. Wilkes?"

"No; I've heard nothing of it."

"I don't know how the affair originated, but Mr. Crutchet tells me it is to be settled at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, on the bowling-green at White Conduit House, Islington. I thought it my duty to inform your lordship of the matter, that you may take any steps you deem proper."

"The bowling-green at White Conduit House! An odd place to fix upon for a hostile meeting! Ah! I now recollect hearing that a set of young reprobates, styling themselves the 'Capuchins,' and wearing the habits of Franciscan friars, meet once

a week at White Conduit House to carouse. Wilkes is chairman of the club. He and his crew may intend some practical joke. Herbert mustn't be made their sport."

"Shall I go there, my lord, and look after Herbert?"

"Perhaps I may go myself—but secretly—for I shan't interfere, save in case of necessity. You shall go with me, and I will take sufficient force to prevent any disturbance. I know Tilbury, the landlord of White Conduit House, and a very obliging fellow he is. I'll give him a hint of my intentions."

"Better not, my lord. He may blab, and spoil all. Don't take him into your confidence till the last moment."

"Ay, ay, we must have the laugh against the Capuchins. "But who acts as Herbert's second?"

"Sir Felix Bland, my lord."

"Sir Felix Bland! Gadzooks! you surprise me!—the most pacific person of my acquaintance,

and the last I should expect to be engaged in a duel at all. An amicable arrangement of the affair would have been more in his way."

"He tried to arrange it, but your nephew is a lad of great spirit, and having, I suppose, received some affront from Mr. Wilkes which he could not brook, refused to apologise."

"I like him the better for it. I wouldn't have a nephew of mine show the white feather. But I wish Tradescant had been his second."

"That remark emboldens me to mention, my lord, that your son will be on the ground, though, of course, merely as a looker-on."

"I'm glad to hear it. I will be there too—but shall keep in the background. We must start early, in order to get there before them. I'll give you full instructions anon."

"I am at your lordship's orders."

XV.

MASTER AND VALET.

WHEN the business of the day was over—and not before—Tradescant took Herbert to his own room, in order to give him the promised lesson in fencing.

Producing a couple of foils, Tradescant bade him stand on guard, and as Herbert complied, his air and deportment satisfied the other that he would prove no contemptible antagonist. The result of an hour's practice confirmed the good opinion which Tradescant had formed of his cousin's address. As may be expected, however, Herbert had

some faults. Possessing in an eminent degree the essentials of the art—quickness of sight, agility of wrist, great flexibility of frame, firmness and swiftness in delivering a thrust, rapidity in parrying and returning, and, above all, remarkable coolness — he was unacquainted with many of the subtleties at that time practised by the most skilful swordsmen, and it was to supply his deficiency in this respect that Tradescant chiefly addressed himself. Herbert proved an apt scholar, and quickly comprehended the instructions given him.

The lesson ended, Tradescant pointed to his collection of swords, and begged Herbert to examine them, and select a weapon that suited him.

"You'll find them of all sizes," he said; "but though you are a tall fellow, I advise you not to choose too long a sword, as if your adversary should get the feeble of your blade, you might find it difficult to disengage your point, and so give him the advantage. Here's a French sword, and a capital one it is. You shall judge of its

temper," he added, bending it almost double against the floor, and then allowing it to spring forcibly backwards. "Take it. You won't find a better."

"A beautiful blade indeed!" exclaimed Herbert, as he took the weapon, "and, though very light in hand, not likely to break."

"Break!—not it!" rejoined Tradescant, with a smile. "Follow my instructions, and I'll engage you shall pink your adversary with it."

Soon after this the cousins separated for the night.

For the first time since Tiplady had been in his service, Tradescant remained at home during the whole evening, occupying himself and his astounded valet in putting his room in order. All the portraits of figurantes and prize-fighters, with the pictures of race-horses and cock-fights, bedecking the walls, were taken down; while the dominos and masks, with sundry other articles which did not accord with his present tastes, were transferred

to Tiplady. "Take them away," he said; "sell them, or do what you will with them. I shall never wear them more."

"Is your honour serious?" inquired the perplexed valet. "Do you mean to say you have done with masquerades, ridottos, and festinos?"

"Entirely, Tip," rejoined Tradescant. "Ranelagh will never behold me more, nor Vauxhall. Never again shall I mingle as heretofore among the idle votaries of pleasure. I have awakened to a sense of my follies. Henceforth, my air and deportment will be changed, and I shall assume a sober and sedate manner, conformable to the character I mean to profess."

"Sorry to hear it, sir, for I think your present manner is far preferable to the one you propose to adopt."

"My dress also will correspond with my changed deportment. I shall put on plainer attire. You are welcome to all my richest suits, Tip—my gold-

laced coats and flowered waistcoats, my Mechlin frills and ruffles and cobweb silk stockings."

"Now I come to think upon it, perhaps your honour did dress a little too showily. A sober style might be better—especially if you mean to occupy yourself with mercantile pursuits. Mr. Crutchet should be your model, sir."

"You are laughing at me, rascal, I perceive. Have a care, or I shall withdraw my gift. Tell Le Gros I shan't wear a dishevelled peruke in future, but a plain bob."

"Hadn't you better try a 'prentice's buckle, sir? It is simple, but becoming."

"A truce to your jeers. Do as I bid you. And mind this—I shall expect you to copy me, to lay aside your frivolous and coxcombical manner, to wear a grave countenance, and assume a quiet and respectful deportment."

"Excuse me, sir, I can't play the hypocrite. I haven't a father to cajole."

coach is waiting for us in Queen-street. Carry these two swords, Tip, and come with us."

On this the trio descended the staircase as noiselessly as they could, and were let out by the hall-porter, who laughed to himself at what was going on, having let out the Lord Mayor and Candish some quarter of an hour previously.

Beneath the porch outside they found the faithful Crutchet, protected from the cold foggy air by cloak and woollen comforter. Hard by was a hackney-coach, and, without making any remarks, all the party entered it with the exception of Tiplady, who, mounting the box, directed the coachman to drive to Aldersgate-street.

The morning was dull and foggy—such as might be expected to usher in a regular November day. The miserable lamps with which Cheapside was at that time provided were still burning, but their feeble glimmer scarcely served to pierce through the murky atmosphere. A few link-boys were seen wandering about with lighted flambeaux, and

a couple of these offered their services to the gentlemen in the coach, and were engaged by them. Here and there a shop was opened, but, generally speaking, doors and windows were closed, and the inmates of the houses, it is to be presumed, still a-bed. The few people in the street looked like ghosts, and carts and other vehicles moved slowly and cautiously along.

Not without more than one stoppage did the coachman find his way to Aldersgate-street, and, guided by Tiplady, pulled up at Sir Felix Bland's door. Little could be discerned of the alderman's dwelling, and indeed there was nothing worth notice about it, except that it was a good substantial structure, the lower part being used as a saddler's shop, with a great gilt horse for a sign. The little alderman's chariot, however, was in waiting, and the instant the bell was rung Sir Felix answered the summons in person. He insisted upon Herbert riding with him, and the young man felt bound to comply. In this way

the two vehicles proceeded slowly towards the place of rendezvous.

White Conduit House, whither our friends were bound, not on pleasure, but with hostile intent, on this foggy November morning, was situated in the neighbourhood of the pleasant and salubrious suburb of Islington, and much resorted to by the citizens of the last century. It may be described as a second-rate Vauxhall, since it possessed some of the features of the well-known place of entertainment on the Surrey side of the river—now, we regret to say, numbered with the past. But though the fêtes of White Conduit House could not be compared in point of splendour with those of the more fashionable establishment—though its lamps were less numerous, its fireworks less brilliant, and its musicians inferior to those of Vauxhall—though few of the beau-monde patronised the gardens, still they were tolerably attractive, and had the recommendation of furnishing far better eatables and drinkables, at a much less cost, than

the more ostentatious place of amusement. Really good punch, a slice of ham somewhat thicker than a wafer, and a fowl that *could* be carved, and eaten when carved, might be obtained at White Conduit House at a moderate price; and if there were not as many fine folks there as might be seen at Vauxhall, that didn't matter to the citizens, who liked to smoke their pipes and quaff their punch comfortably, while their wives and daughters found plenty of amusement in listening to the strains from the orchestra, watching the fireworks, dancing, or exploring the shady walks with their gallants. In a word, White Conduit House was a huge suburban tavern, with extensive gardens attached to it. Like Vauxhall, it was in existence only a few years ago, though greatly on the decline, and was removed to make way for the street now occupying its site. Besides the house itself, at the period in question, there were two ornamental buildings, containing a handsome ball-room and refreshment-rooms, and in the midst of the gardens,

which, as we have said, were prettily enough disposed with walks, shady groves, alcoves, pavilions, and orchestras, was a round fish-pond of considerable size, encircled by a high quickset hedge, in which were inserted boxes for the accommodation of the company—these boxes being adorned with paintings copied from the Dutch and Flemish masters. Of course, the fish-pond would have been incomplete without a boat or two, and these were not wanting. A large punt, provided with seats, rods, and fishing-tackle, was moored in the centre of the water. In another part of the garden was a spacious and well-kept bowling-green, with boxes at either end, and this bowling-green and the fish-pond constituted with many the chief attractions of the place. No ridottos al fresco, no festinos or masked balls, were given there as at Ranelagh or Vauxhall, but on special occasions there were fêtes, with fireworks, rope-dancing, and other amusements, highly satisfactory to the pleasure-loving citizens.

But the season was over, and the gardens, which had been thronged during the warm weather, were now deserted. The tavern, however, being noted for the excellence of its cookery and wines, still attracted many customers, and amongst others Wilkes and his friends, who, as the reader is already aware, held one of their clubs there.

This club—the "Capuchins"—had some peculiarities, which cannot very well be explained without describing its origin. Thus, then, it arose. Amongst Wilkes's possessions in Bucks were the remains of a once noble, and still remarkably picturesque monastic establishment, called Medmenham Abbey, delightfully situated on the banks of the Thames between Henley and Marlow. No more charming retreat for one sated with pleasure and desirous of solitude could be found; and thither in summer, when town became insupportable, and the country was in perfection, Wilkes repaired. But it was not for temporary seclusion from society that the witty Sybarite sought the

cells and cloisters of Medmenham; it was not for meditation, or study, or to bury himself in the surrounding groves; it was not for boating or fishing that he came there, but, we regret to say, for unrestrained indulgence in riot and excess. As may be supposed, he did not go there alone, but took with him persons of congenial taste, whose habits were as abandoned as his own, and scandalously were the venerable walls desecrated by the licentious crew. Comus and his rabble rout were not worse than Wilkes and his reprobate associates. In order to give piquancy to their orgies, they styled themselves Monks of Saint Francis, and assumed the garb of the brethren of that order. But devotional exercises, it will easily be conceived, formed no part of their practice. Their hymns were in praise of heathen deities, their worship at unholy shrines. Over the entrance of the hall wherein their revelries were held was inscribed the Rabelaisian motto, FAYS CE QUE

VOUDRAS—and they acted up to it, giving free scope to their inclinations.

Of this society Wilkes was president, or, as he was styled by the brotherhood, Father Abbot.

Later in the year, when Medmenham Abbey lost its attractions, the Capuchins held occasional meetings in town, and had lately chosen White Conduit House for that purpose, being influenced in their choice by the good wines and good cookery to be had there, as well as by the complaisance of the host, Mr. Tilbury, who made no objections to their proceedings. To speak truth, the Capuchins did not suit every house, and more than one tavern-keeper had declined the honour of their custom. However, as they paid well, and it was the dull season, and he had plenty of rooms to spare, Mr. Tilbury not only consented to receive them, but gave them the best his kitchen and cellars could produce. Magnificent was the claret he set before them, and many a dozen of it was

consumed by the jovial Capuchins, who sometimes prolonged their revels throughout the night.

From this it will be easily understood why Wilkes appointed White Conduit House as a place of rendezvous with Herbert. As the Capuchins supped there overnight, he could settle the affair without inconvenience. A duel would be an agreeable finish to the entertainment. He had merely to step on to the bowling-green to meet his man, and return to breakfast—victor, of course —and talk over the encounter with his friends. This was what he meant to do, but a little variation was made in the plan, as will more fully appear hereafter.

All the Capuchins—the club was limited to a dozen—were not assembled on the occasion; but the party consisted of Lord Sandwich, Sir William Stanhope, Sir Francis Dashwood, and of course Tom Potter and Wilkes. In accordance with the rules of the society they all wore the grey gowns proper to the religious order whose name they

had borrowed, with cowls for the head and cords for the waist. Wilkes's attire as abbot differed so far only from the others in that his gown was made of somewhat richer material, while he wore an ornamental girdle round his waist. Over the chimney-piece was suspended the motto of the fraternity. A jolly night they had of it, surfeiting themselves with claret, and continuing their libations until they all fell asleep in their chairs.

And now to return to the opposite party. The fog was as dense as ever when the two conveyances reached White Conduit House, and it seemed scarcely possible that a duel could take place on a morning so unpropitious.

"If you fight at all, it must be by torchlight," observed Sir Felix. "It appears to get darker each moment. I can scarcely make out whether this is White Conduit House or not."

"All right, sir," cried a voice from some invisible person. "All right."

"Is that you, Mr. Tilbury?" inquired the little

alderman, as a stout personage presented himself before the chariot.

"Yes, yes, 'tis I, Sir Felix," replied the host. "Will it please you to alight? Mr. Wilkes and his friends expect you."

"Oh, they're here, are they?" cried the little alderman, rather surprised. "I was afraid this bad morning might have kept them away."

"So it might," rejoined Tilbury, with a laugh; "but they took the precaution of coming overnight. They supped here, Sir Felix. You're not a monk, I suppose, sir?"

"A monk! What d'ye mean, Mr. Tilbury? No, sir, I'm a member of the Established Church. A strange question!"

"You'll not think it so strange when you go into the house, Sir Felix, and see the gentlemen in their gowns."

"Night-gowns or morning-gowns, Mr. Tilbury?"

"Their gowns serve both purposes, Sir Felix,"

laughed the host. "Pray come in, gentlemen. I'll show you the way."

By this time the whole party had alighted, and now followed the landlord into the house.

Calling for a pair of lighted candles, which were quickly brought him, Tilbury preceded them down a passage, and at last threw open the door of a large room, on entering which an extraordinary scene was presented to their gaze.

XVII.

THE "CAPUCHINS."

ROUND a table covered with wine-glasses and long-necked flasks, and on which candles were still alight, though well-nigh burnt down to the socket, sat five friars—for such they seemed—fast asleep. Being without their wigs, the close-shaven heads of the mock Franciscans materially aided their resemblance to the characters assumed.

"Who are these?" inquired Sir Felix, in a low voice.

"Don't you know, sir?" rejoined Tilbury. "These are Mr. Wilkes and his friends."

"The deuce they are!" exclaimed the little alderman. "Bless my life! I could never have believed it."

"Stay a moment, Tilbury," said Tradescant, as the landlord was about to arouse the sleepers. "We'll have a jest with them. Give one of those swords to Mr. Crutchet, Tip, and draw the other yourself. That's well. Now each of you follow my example." And drawing his sword, he held it in a menacing attitude over Wilkes's head.

Willing to humour the jest, Herbert stood with his drawn sword over Tom Potter, while Sir Felix assumed a similar position beside Lord Sandwich, and Crutchet and Tiplady presented their weapons at Dashwood and Stanhope.

No sooner was this done than Tilbury called out in a stentorian voice, "Wake up, gentlemen!" instantly rousing the sleepers, who were greatly startled by finding themselves thus menaced.

"Here, take my purse and spare my life!" cried Wilkes, fancying himself assailed by highwaymen.

"Ha! ha! don't you know me?" exclaimed Tradescant, lowering his sword, and indulging in a hearty fit of laughter, in which the rest of the company joined.

"Death and fiends! is it you, Lorimer?" cried Wilkes, starting to his feet with a furious expression of countenance. And he was proceeding in an angry strain, but finding his rage only increased the general merriment, he changed his tone, and inquired, "What brings you here at this unearthly hour?"

"Unearthly hour!" rejoined Tradescant, laughing. "Why, it's eight o'clock, the hour you yourself appointed for a meeting with my cousin Herbert."

"The deuce it is!" exclaimed Wilkes. "I must have overslept myself sadly. I fancied it was the middle of the night. It's Tilbury's fault—he ought to have roused me at seven o'clock. Is your cousin here?"

"Yes, there he is," replied Tradescant, pointing to Herbert.

"Pray make my excuses to him for my want of punctuality," pursued Wilkes. "It has been entirely unintentional on my part. Our club—the Capuchins—met here last night, and we drank rather too much claret."

"That will account for your sleeping so soundly," observed Tradescant. "And now, what's to be done?"

"Done! why, in the first place, we'll adjourn to the bowling-green and settle this little affair, and then return to breakfast."

"Easily said," rejoined Tradescant; "but there's a regular November fog out of doors which may hinder you. You won't be able to see each other."

"Diable!" exclaimed Wilkes. "That's unlucky!"

"With submission to both parties," interposed Sir Felix, "I would venture to suggest that the

affair be postponed to a more favourable opportunity."

"Deferred, at all events, till the fog clears off," observed Tom Potter. "In an hour it may be all right. Breakfast first, and fight afterwards. That's my proposition."

"The fog isn't likely to clear off," observed Sir Felix. "We may be kept here till to-morrow. I vote that the duel be postponed."

"I object to any delay," said Herbert. "Be the weather what it may—and I own it is bad enough—I am ready to meet my adversary. Our chances are equal."

"Very true, sir!" cried Wilkes. "I object to delay as strongly as yourself. A fog will never stop two men really bent on fighting. I'll be with you in a trice."

And withdrawing behind a screen, he presently reappeared in his ordinary attire.

"Hear me, gentlemen," cried Sir Felix. "I protest against the course you are about to pursue.

The fog is so thick that you might as well fight in this room with the lights put out."

"A capital suggestion!" cried Wilkes. "Suppose we do fight here. We have only to remove this table."

"The place is perfectly immaterial to me," observed Herbert. "Here, or elsewhere, I am at your service."

"But it's not immaterial to me," interposed Tilbury. "No fighting in this room, gentlemen. I don't mind it on the bowling-green, but if either of you should be killed here, it would be exceedingly unpleasant, and might ruin the custom of the house.

"Our host's reasons are unanswerable," observed Wilkes, with a laugh. "Nothing for it but the bowling-green. We'll there at once. Fetch a couple of lanterns, Tilbury."

"Bless you, sir, lanterns would be of no avail. There are some link-men outside. Shall I hire their flambeaux?"

"A bright idea!" exclaimed Wilkes. "About it at once, Tilbury, and bring the links to us in the garden. A duel by torchlight will be a novelty—something to talk about. But how is it I see you here, Lorimer, and apparently on my opponent's side? A day or two ago, you wouldn't acknowledge your kinsman. Now, you are hand and glove with him."

"Since we last met, Mr. Wilkes, I am a good deal changed in many respects," replied Tradescant; "and I have discovered qualities in my cousin to which I was stupidly blind before. As this quarrel partly originated with me, or at least arose out of circumstances with which I was connected, I could wish it might be amicably arranged."

"I don't see how that can be," said Wilkes; "it has gone too far now."

By this time, the Capuchins, having divested themselves of their gowns, and resumed their usual

attire, the whole party were about to leave the room, when they were stopped by Sir Felix.

"I tell you what it is, gentlemen," said he. "I don't approve of this fighting in a fog. There's no precedent for such a duel. If fatal consequences ensue, the seconds will be hanged—yes, gentlemen, hanged. I must decline, therefore, to be a party to the encounter."

"Then I will take your place," said Tradescant. "I am willing to run the risk of a halter in such a cause."

"Mr. Herbert must excuse me for deserting him at the last moment, but I really can't assist in such an irregular proceeding; and I must again protest——"

"Protest be hanged!" cried Tom Potter. "Come along! The affair ought to have been over by this time."

On this the whole party, with the exception

of Sir Felix, quitted the room, and repaired to the garden.

The day had not improved. The fog was as dense as ever; orange-tawny in colour, and almost palpable. Even at a yard's distance a post could scarcely be distinguished.

"Upon my soul, it is a most execrable day!" exclaimed Wilkes. "I had no idea the fog was so bad. Shall we go on?"

"Certainly," replied Herbert. "The first step is taken. We must go through with it now."

"Be it so," cried Wilkes. "Keep near me. I'm acquainted with the place, and will endeavour to show the way."

With this he moved on, and the rest followed. But nothing is more deceptive than a fog, and though Wilkes made sure he was going in the right direction, he soon found himself on the edge of the fish-pond, into which another step would have plunged him.

"Halt!" he exclaimed. "We're wrong. I

shall never be able to find the way without the torches. What the devil is Tilbury about that he doesn't send them?"

"Here they are!" exclaimed Tradescant, as lights were seen struggling through the gloom.

"Halloo! where are you, gentlemen?" shouted Tilbury.

"Here!—almost in the fish-pond," rejoined Wilkes. "Come to the rescue—quick!"

"Why, who the deuce are these?" cried Lord Sandwich, as the landlord came up, attended by five Capuchins, bearing torches. Each monk had his cowl drawn over his head, so as to shroud his visage.

"Zounds! the rascals have made free with our gowns," cried Dashwood.

"No other members of the club were expected," said Stanhope. "Who are these fellows, Tilbury?"

"Only some of my men, Sir William," replied the host. "I thought Mr. Wilkes would like to have them arrayed in this way."

"You've taken a great liberty, Mr. Tilbury," said Wilkes. "Death! sir, we shall never be able to wear our gowns again."

"I'm very sorry, sir," replied the host, in an apologetic tone. "I did it to please you. I'm something of an artist, sir, and I thought these monkish figures, holding torches, would give a picturesque effect to the conflict. I may be wrong, Mr. Wilkes, but that was my motive."

"Gad! I think you are right, Tilbury," cried Lord Sandwich, laughing.

"Don't stop talking here, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Tom Potter. "I'm half choked with this infernal fog. Show the way to the bowling-green, Tilbury, as quickly as you can—consistently with our safety."

XVIII.

A DUEL IN A FOG.

DIRECTING the monkish torchbearers to march in advance, Tilbury put himself at their head, and proceeded cautiously along a covered walk leading to the bowling-green, which they luckily reached without further hindrance.

After a brief consultation between Tom Potter and Tradescant, the whole party proceeded to what they judged to be the centre of the green, and having ascertained by holding down the links that the ground was free from obstruction of any kind, they at once prepared for the business in hand;

the first care of the seconds being to place the torchbearers in such a position that no undue advantage should be given to either side.

This was a task of some little difficulty, as the seconds could not exactly agree, but at length it was satisfactorily accomplished. Four of the monks were arranged in a square, one at each corner, and exactly four yards apart, while the fifth man was ordered to stand beside the combatants. Those at the corners were enjoined to remain perfectly motionless whatever might occur, but the central torchbearer might follow the movements of the combatants, but must be careful to keep out of the way, and distribute the light as fairly as possible. The links at each angle were to be held aloft, and not waved or shifted on any account, but the central torch was not to be so much elevated, and might be raised or lowered according to the exigencies of the moment, at the discretion of the bearer. Not a word was to be uttered by any of the torchbearers.

These regulations made, the two antagonists, who by this time had divested themselves of coat and waistcoat, stepped into the square, while the seconds retired, and the rest of the party, who looked on with considerable interest, grouped themselves around.

At this moment the scene was exceedingly picturesque, and must have delighted the artistic eye of Mr. Tilbury. Seen through the thick tawny vapour with which the torchlight ineffectually contended, the monkish figures, cowled and gowned, had a strange fantastic effect, and looked like assistants at some dread and mysterious ceremonial. Viewed through the same opaque medium, and only imperfectly distinguished by the spectators, the chief actors in this singular scene had an equally ghostly appearance, and by a very slight stretch of the imagination might have been taken for phantoms of fierce duellists who had perished by each other's hands, and had been summoned from a bloody grave to renew their strife.

Unconscious, however, of the effect they produced on the beholders, and feeling strongly enough that they still belonged to this world, the two antagonists approached each other, and lighted by the central torchbearer, who carried out his instructions as carefully as he could, courteously saluted each other, taking off their hats and replacing them. They then beat the appeal and engaged.

No sooner did the combat begin than they both made the discovery that it was more difficult to fight under circumstances like the present than in the dark. Sight and judgment were alike at fault, and the well-meant efforts of the torchbearer only served to distract them still more.

"Confound you! keep that torch away. You put out my eyes," cried Wilkes.

After another moment, Herbert called out,

"Bring the torch nearer! I can't see."

Puzzled by these conflicting orders, the torch-

bearer stood still, not knowing what to do, when Tradescant shouted to him,

"Keep near them, will you, and don't attend to any orders but mine."

"Don't stir, sirrah!" cried Tom Potter. "The torch blinds my man."

"But mine can't see," cried Tradescant. "Go nearer, I tell you."

"Stay where you are, rascal!" roared Wilkes. "If you come any closer, I'll cut your throat when the fight's over."

"And I'll let light into your body unless you give us some here," cried Herbert.

"What am I to do, gentlemen?" said the perplexed torchbearer, drawing a little nearer. "I can't please you both."

But the combatants were now too much occupied with each other to notice him. A thrust in tierce by Wilkes was well parried by Herbert, and returned by him with such dexterity and quick-

ness, that had there been light enough, the combat might have been suddenly terminated. As it was, Herbert's sword passed through his adversary's shirt near the right breast.

"A hit!" exclaimed Herbert.

"A mere scratch! I scarcely felt it. Look to yourself, sir!" cried Wilkes, delivering a thrust in carte, which was instantly parried and returned.

"They're well at it now," cried Dashwood. "Will you back your man for a hundred, Lorimer?"

"I'd back him and give odds, but I don't bet now, Sir Francis," replied Tradescant.

"So Tom Potter told me," said Dashwood; "but I didn't believe him."

"I wish I could see their play," said Lord Sandwich; "they seem to fence well."

"Wonderfully well, all things considered," replied Sir William Stanhope. "Wilkes seems to have found his match. I thought he would have settled it before this."

"I thought so," rejoined Tom Potter; "the young draper is a maître d'escrime."

"No jokes about drapers, Tom, if you please," said Tradescant. "Recollect, I'm one myself."

"Pshaw! you needn't carry on that farce here. We're not in Cheapside."

At this moment the clash of steel proved that the two combatants were sharply engaged.

"Sa! sa! there they go!" cried Potter—"thrust—parry—reposte—pass in carte—feint in carte over the arm—disengage—counter disengage—thrust—recovery in carte."

"Why, you can't see them, Tom?" cried Lord Sandwich.

"No, but I can hear. I know exactly what they're about. There, one of them is beating fiercely with the edge of his sword on the other's blade. That must be Wilkes trying to disarm his antagonist."

"But he hasn't succeeded, you find," observed Tradescant; "and is now being attacked in his turn."

"Well done, draper!" exclaimed Potter. "The lad fights with spirit. Did you mark that? There was a thrust in tierce, parried with the prime, and followed by a strong smart beat on the feeble—down goes the sword."

"Whose sword?" cried Tradescant.

"The draper's," rejoined Potter. "Your man is worsted."

"I'm not sure of that," replied Tradescant.

"But I am," replied Potter.

And they both hurried to the scene of strife, when Potter's conjecture proved to be correct. Herbert's sword had been beaten from his grasp.

"This wouldn't have happened if I had had more light," said the young man, angrily.

"Say you so?" cried Wilkes. "Then we'll have another bout. Take your sword, and begin again."

"No, no, this mustn't be," cried Tradescant.

"Why not?" rejoined Tom Potter. "It isn't

for you to object if we are willing. You ought to be infinitely obliged by having a second chance allowed you."

"Why, so we are," said Tradescant; "but——"

"Now, sir," cried Wilkes, impatiently. "Either own yourself defeated and apologise for your insolence, or stand up again."

"I wouldn't have kept you waiting so long, sir," rejoined Herbert, "but I can't find my sword."

"Here are a couple of swords," said Tom Potter. "Take your choice."

And as Herbert took one of them, Wilkes flung aside his own weapon, and armed himself with the other.

"Now we are fairly matched — have at you, sir!" he cried, attacking Herbert.

And ere the seconds had retired, the combatants were again engaged, and evidently with greater fury than before.

"Come nearer, fellow," cried Wilkes to the torchbearer; "you shan't complain of want of light this time, sir."

"Your politeness deserves a better return than I can make for it," rejoined Herbert.

"They're in earnest now," said Tom Potter. "Passes and parades are so rapid I can't follow 'em."

"The combat ought not to have been renewed," observed Tradescant. "Enough had been done before."

"Why didn't you make your man apologise, then?" said Potter. "But don't be uneasy. Wilkes will soon disarm him again. He's about it now, or I'm much mistaken. The draper disengages and thrusts — Wilkes counter-disengages and parries, forcing the draper's blade upwards with the fort of his own — a disarm after the parade."

"No such thing," replied Tradescant. "Both swords are still in hand, as you may hear. There

was a half thrust and an appeal—an answer, a feint on the inside with a disengage on the outside, and a pass—ha! some one is hit!"

"By Heaven! 'tis Wilkes," cried Tom Potter, rushing towards the combatants, followed by Tradescant and the others.

They found Wilkes, scarcely able to stand, supporting himself with his sword, and pressing his hand against his breast, from which the blood was pouring, his shirt being dyed with the sanguinary stream. Beside him stood Herbert, whose looks showed his distress at the victory he had gained.

"I hope you are not much hurt, sir?" he inquired, in tones of the greatest anxiety.

"My business, I fear, is done," rejoined Wilkes, in a feeble voice; "but I freely forgive you, and beg you to take care of your own safety—oh!" And he would have sunk to the ground if Tom Potter had not caught him in his arms and sustained him.

"Here's a sad mischance!" exclaimed Tradescant. "But you know how averse I was to the renewal of the fight. I feared mischief would come of it. Would that my advice had been taken!"

"It was my fault," groaned Wilkes.

"No, no, you are far too generous, sir," cried Herbert. "I am to blame. I shall for ever reproach myself with what I have done."

"Away with you!" cried Wilkes. "My life is ebbing fast. Consult your safety by flight."

"Yes, fly, sir, fly!" urged Tom Potter.

"What shall I do?—where shall I go?" cried the young man, distractedly.

"Hold a moment!" said Crutchet, stepping up to him.

XIX.

HOW A MARVELLOUS CURE WAS WROUGHT BY CANDISH.

"A SURGEON! a surgeon! In Heaven's name fetch a surgeon!" shouted Tradescant. "Will none of you stir?" he added to the torchbearers, who appeared perfectly apathetic, remaining in their places and holding up their flambeaux as if nothing had happened. "There ought to have been a surgeon in attendance."

"I'll bring one instantly," said the host.

"It is useless," said Wilkes, checking him. "I am past all surgical aid. My only concern is for my antagonist's safety. Isn't he here still? Take him away—take him away, Lorimer."

"Where's Mr. Crutchet?" asked Tradescant.

"Here, sir," replied that personage.

"Go with Herbert," said Tradescant. "Take him to your own lodgings, till I see how this affair terminates."

"I don't think it likely to terminate very seriously, sir," replied Crutchet, in an under tone.

"I'm of a different opinion. Mr. Wilkes, I fear, is mortally wounded."

"He won't die of his present injuries, sir," rejoined Crutchet. "It's all a trick. Don t you observe how easily the other gentlemen take it? Some of 'em are laughing. The landlord is evidently in the plot. And as to those torch-bearers, they don't seem to care a button about the occurrence. A trick, sir, you may depend."

"By Heaven! I believe you are right," cried Tradescant. "Yet how can it have been managed? He must have been hit. Ah! I see! Tom Potter gave them fresh swords."

"Foils, I suspect, sir," rejoined Crutchet.

"That's soon found out," said Tradescant, snatching the weapon which Herbert still held in his grasp, and feeling the point. "You are right, Crutchet, it is a foil."

At this moment the voice of Sir Felix Bland was heard, calling out, "Here's a surgeon! Where's the wounded man? Where's Mr. Wilkes?"

"This way, Sir Felix!" rejoined Tradescant. "This way!"

In another instant the little alderman became visible. With him was a little man, habited in black, whom Tradescant and Crutchet at once recognised as Candish. He was followed by a much taller and stouter personage, wrapped in an ample cloak, and so muffled up about the face that his features could not be discerned. Crutchet, however, had some suspicions as to the identity of the latter.

"You are come in good time, Sir Felix," said

Tradescant. "Poor Mr. Wilkes, I grieve to say, is dangerously hurt."

"Sorry to hear it," rejoined the little alderman; "but here's a surgeon who will save him, if any man can."

"I'll do my best," rejoined Candish. "By your leave, gentlemen — by your leave!" he added, pressing towards Wilkes. "Bring the torch this way."

"No; keep it off!" cried Wilkes. "The light distresses me dreadfully."

"You must put up with a little inconvenience, sir," said Candish. "Let me see the wound. Off with your shirt, sir."

"Off with yourself," rejoined Wilkes. "Don't disturb me. Let me die in peace."

"Excuse me, sir," said Candish, "my business is to prevent you from dying. This to begin." And he proceeded to tear open the other's shirt.

"Zounds, sir! what are you about?" roared Wilkes.

"Hold him fast, sir!" said Candish, to Tom Potter. "Hold him fast, while I apply a potent styptic to the wound, that will stanch the bleeding in no time."

"Curse your styptic!" roared Wilkes. "I'll have none of it."

"Patience, my good sir—patience," cried Candish. "You are in my hands, and must submit to such treatment as I may deem advisable. I won't disguise from you that the application of this blue vitriol"—producing a phial as he spoke—"will give you some pain; but though sharp, it will be momentary."

"Blue vitriol!" exclaimed Wilkes. "Blue devils! you mean. Their chief seems to have visited me in person."

"Besides the blue vitriol," pursued Candish, "I have powdered agaric, a very powerful astringent."

"Powdered agaric! D'ye hear that?" cried Tom Potter, unable to refrain from laughing.

"Apply the blue vitriol and agaric at once, sir. I'll hold the patient."

"At your peril!" roared Wilkes. "Let me go, Tom. Zounds, this is carrying the jest too far."

"A jest, Mr. Wilkes!" exclaimed Candish. "Do you think I would jest with a patient in your condition?"

"In my condition!" echoed Wilkes, breaking from Potter. "'Sdeath, sir! I'm as free from injury as yourself. If you are what you profess, you ought to have discovered my wound to be a mere sham."

"The discovery was needless, Mr. Wilkes,' rejoined Candish. "I was aware of the deception from the first."

Loud laughter from those around, in which the torchbearers joined, followed this confession of the trick.

"It is a great relief to me to find you are unhurt, Mr. Wilkes," said Herbert; "but I should have had just reason to complain, if you had let

me depart under the impression that I had killed you."

"I won't attempt to say anything in my defence," rejoined Wilkes. "But I'm glad you didn't go; and as the laugh has been decidedly against me, you will, perhaps, feel disposed to forgive me."

"Readily," returned Herbert. "And now, let me add, that I regret the observations I made upon you in the City Mall, and at which you took umbrage."

"Enough," said Wilkes. "I am perfectly satisfied. Animosity no longer exists on my part. Indeed, if you will permit me, I shall be happy to become your friend, for I admire your spirit." And he offered him his hand, which Herbert cordially grasped.

"We ought to thank you for your interference, Sir Felix," said Tom Potter, "since you have so pleasantly terminated the affair."

"Nay, sir, you must thank Mr. Candish," re-

joined the little alderman. "It's his doing—not mine."

"I have met Mr. Candish before, I think," observed Potter. "Were you not at Picard's when the bank was broken, sir?"

"I was," replied Candish. "I had reasons for going there. But I mean it to be my last appearance in a gaming-house."

"As it shall be mine," observed Tradescant.

"'Tis a pity the Lord Mayor can't hear your praiseworthy determination, Lorimer," remarked Tom Potter, with a sneer. "It might have a good effect upon him, and reinstate you in his favour."

"The Lord Mayor *did* hear the observation, Mr. Potter," said the stout personage standing by Sir Felix, unmuffling the lower part of his face as he spoke, and disclosing the features of Sir Gresham. "The Lord Mayor *did* hear it, sir," he repeated, "and it is likely to have the effect you anticipate, since he believes it to be sincere.

You may be surprised to see me here, gentlemen," he continued, "and I owe you some explanation of my presence. I am not here to spy upon your actions, or to interfere with your proceedings. But having learnt that a duel was to take place on this spot between my nephew and Mr. Wilkes, and suspecting, I confess, from the strange locality chosen, and from other reasons, which I need not particularise, that my nephew was to be the victim of some wild frolic, I took precautions—not to prevent the meeting, for I felt perfectly certain that Herbert was well able to defend his own honour—but to counteract any trick, should such be intended. These torchbearers are my men, and I trust Mr. Tilbury will not incur your displeasure for the slight assistance he has rendered me in my scheme—assistance, I may add, which he could not very well refuse."

"We ought to express regret at having brought your lordship out at such an early hour, and on such a wretched morning," rejoined Wilkes; "but

any circumstance which procures us the honour of your company must be gratifying to the Capuchins, and we trust, since you are here, you will do us the favour to stay and breakfast with us."

"I accept your invitation with great pleasure, Mr. Wilkes," replied Sir Gresham. "Though I should not have ventured to sup with the jovial monks of St. Francis, I am not afraid to breakfast with them. But you must let me eat and drink what I please."

"'Fays ce que voudras' is our device," rejoined Wilkes. "Your lordship shall do just what you will."

"Then I am with you," replied Sir Gresham; "and the sooner we sit down the better; for, in spite of the fog, I have a famous appetite."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Wilkes; "and I trust Mr. Tilbury will use you well."

"His lordship shall have the best my house can furnish," replied Tilbury; "but this is an honour I did not expect."

"Make no apologies, sir," said Sir Gresham; "what will do for the epicurean Capuchins may very well do for a plain man like myself."

On this the whole party, lighted by the torch-bearers, returned to the house, where an excellent breakfast was presently served, to which they sat down, and did full justice. Placed between Wilkes and Lord Sandwich, the Lord Mayor laughed as heartily at the piquant sallies and diverting stories of the ugly wit as the great moralist, Dr. Johnson, did on the memorable occasion when he dined in Wilkes's company. "Sir, there was no resisting the dog."

By the time the repast was over, the fog had cleared off, so that the Lord Mayor and Sir Felix Bland had a pleasant ride together to the Mansion House; while Tradescant and Herbert, accompanied by Crutchet, found their way back to Cheapside.

End of the Third Book.

BOOK IV.

THE MANSION HOUSE.

I.

HOW THE MANSION HOUSE WAS BUILT ON STOCKS-MARKET.

CONSIDERING the importance of the Corporation of the City of London, the large funds at their disposal, their fondness for show, and proverbial love of sumptuous banquets and entertainments—considering, also, the quasi-regal character of the Lord Mayor, the dignity he has to support, the duties to perform, and the princely hospitality he is bound to practise—considering the number of officers attached to his household, and the splendour of his retinue, it is scarcely credible that no fixed residence adapted to the requirements of

so great a personage, and enabling him to exercise his high functions with becoming effect, should have been provided before the middle of the last century.

Yet so it was. Up to this date the Lord Mayor either occupied his own house, which in very rare instances offered adequate accommodation for his immense establishment, while it necessarily restricted the size and frequency of his entertainments, or he was compelled to use the hall of one of the twelve great City companies—an alternative, as will be apparent, fraught with many inconveniences.

Had we possessed a fine old mediæval mansion, picturesque in style, replete with historical associations, corresponding in some measure with the grand municipal halls to be met with on the Continent, or even with some of the ancient halls of the City companies—had such a mansion as this appertained to the Lord Mayor, and had it luckily escaped the conflagration of 1666, or been

carefully restored or rebuilt,—how infinitely preferable would it have been to the present structure! But it is useless to sigh for the impossible. Let us be content with what we have got.

And now for the history of the present structure. In 1739, during the mayoralty of the Right Honourable Micajah Perry, a resolution was come to by the municipal authorities to erect a house for their chief, wherein he might reside during his term of office, administer justice, uphold the dignity and importance of the Corporation, and practise the rites of hospitality in a manner commensurate with the wishes of the feast-loving citizens of London.

Several sites were proposed for the intended structure—amongst others, Moorfields, and a space at the east end of Paternoster-row, fronting Cheapside—but ultimately Stocks-market, at the north-east corner of Walbrook, was selected as being central, and contiguous to the Royal Exchange and the Bank of England.

Stocks-market, which derived its name from a pair of stocks anciently set upon the spot for the punishment of offenders, was one of the oldest markets in the city of London, having been established in 1282 by Henry de Walleis, then Mayor. Few would imagine that on the place where the ponderous Mansion House now stands, where thousands upon thousands pass and repass, where the pavement is always inconveniently crowded, and the street constantly stopped by carriages and public conveyances, little more than a century ago there was a pretty fruit-market, planted on the east side with rows of trees, having an antique conduit at the north end surmounted by an equestrian statue, and stalls where fruit and vegetables of the choicest kind were vended. An odd story is told about the equestrian statue. It was designed for John Sobieski, King of Poland, but was left on the maker's hands, and a statue of Charles II. being wanted by Sir Robert Viner after the Restoration, he availed himself of this

image with commendable thrift, converting the warlike Pole into the Merry Monarch, and the turbaned Turk, whom his horse was trampling beneath its feet, into Oliver Cromwell.

Trees, stalls, conduit, and statue were removed in 1739.

On digging the foundation of the proposed building, the ground proved to be so full of springs that strong piles were needed for the support of the erection. Nearly fourteen years were occupied in the work—the first Lord Mayor who tenanted the Mansion House being Sir Crisp Gascoigne, in 1753.

Built of Portland stone, and possessing a noble portico of Corinthian columns, supporting a heavy pediment adorned with a bas-relief symbolical of the wealth and dignity of London; lighted by two tiers of large and well-proportioned windows beneath the portico, and by a lesser tier above it; with a grand entrance, approached on either side by a lofty flight of steps, protected by a balus-

made; with a massive rustic basement, in the midst of which is a door leading to the kitchen and other offices,—the structure may be said to present an imposing if not a handsome façade. On either side, between Corinthian pilasters, is an immense Venetian window belonging to the Egyptian Hall.

At the period of which we write, and for many years afterwards, the roof was loaded with a heavy and unsightly upper story, termed, in derision, the "Mare's (Mayor's) Nest;" but this has been judiciously taken down, to the great improvement in the appearance of the building. The situation is too low and confined for a structure of such magnitude.

Passing through the grand entrance we come upon a spacious saloon—one of the finest features of the interior—adorned with Corinthian pillars, enriched by a carved wainscoting representing warlike implements, and lighted from above by a large dome and two lesser domes. At the south

end of this lordly saloon lies the Egyptian Hall, so called because it was built after a design by Vitruvius bearing that designation. This is really a magnificent banqueting-hall, and worthy of the Lord Mayor. Upwards of ninety feet in length and sixty in breadth, it occupies the entire width of the house, and is lighted by the two great Venetian windows previously referred to.

On either side of this stately chamber are eight immense Corinthian columns, with two half columns of the same order at each end. Between the larger pillars are now placed pieces of sculpture, and when prepared for some grand entertainment, richly decorated, brilliantly illuminated, and filled with company, the effect of the hall is extraordinarily fine.

In this gorgeous banqueting-chamber are dispensed the hospitalities of the Corporation of the City of London, on a scale of splendour and prodigality not to be surpassed. Here its wealth of plate is displayed. Here the costliest delicacies

and the choicest wines are abundantly supplied. Here come the prince, the peer, the popular statesman, the great lawyer, the eminent divine, the naval and military commander, the foreign potentate and ambassador. Here the civic authorities are at home, and vie with their chief in attention to the City's guests. Since the first banquet given here in 1753 by Sir Crisp Gascoigne, how many state dinners have been served in this superb hall, how many illustrious orators spoken within it—with what hosts have its tables been crowded, and with what deafening cheers have its walls resounded!

The principal apartments on the first floor are the Justice-room, the Swordbearer's-room, and a room called Wilkes's Parlour, after the personage introduced in this story, who became at a later period of his career, during the mayoralty of his friend Crosby, more particularly identified with the Mansion House. The ball-room was formerly in the upper story. The state-rooms are hand-

some, but heavy and gloomy. The interior of the house may be described as a quadrangle built around the grand saloon, and connected by chambers and galleries.

Such is the residence provided by the city of London for their chief magistrate, at a cost of nearly 71,000*l.* The plate cost more than 11,000*l.*, and the stock must be enormous, since an outlay of 500*l.* in the purchase of plate is incumbent upon each Lord Mayor.

II.

HOW THE LORD MAYOR TOOK POSSESSION OF THE MANSION HOUSE, AND HOW HE DISCHARGED HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR some months the Lord Mayor had now occupied the Mansion House.

Had he possessed no other merit than that of being a sumptuous host, Sir Gresham Lorimer would probably have been nearly as popular as he was with a set of men who, like the Corporation of the City of London, regard unbounded hospitality as the first of virtues; but as his many good qualities became generally known, he rose in the esteem of all classes of his fellow citizens.

If he enjoyed all the pomps and pleasures of his high office, and revelled in its sweets, he at the same time shunned none of its labours and cares, but discharged his duties zealously and well.

Every claim which the public could have upon him was fulfilled. In turn he attended the several courts of judicature at which he was required to preside—the Hustings, the Court of Requests, the Lord Mayor's Court, the Court of City Orphans, the Court of Common Council, the Chamberlain's Court, and others, the mere enumeration of which would be tedious.

Beset as he was by a multiplicity of affairs, having many important questions to decide and many differences to adjust, Sir Gresham's judgment was generally correct, and his manner ever calm and conciliatory. Whether he had to receive the inquest of the City wards on Plough Monday; to go in state to the church of St. Lawrence, Guildhall, on the first Sunday in Epiphany; to present an address to the throne in

his gold gown, and attended by the Corporation; to proceed in state to Temple-bar and admit the heralds when war was proclaimed against Spain, and to cause the proclamation to be read at the Royal Exchange and elsewhere in the City,—whatever he had to do, he did it efficiently and well. The City was proud of him, and with reason.

Moreover, Sir Gresham's kindness and generosity endeared him to many who only approached him to seek assistance or relief. Easily accessible, he readily granted an audience to all who desired to see him, his best advice being given to those who sought it, while his affability and consideration were such, that though an applicant might be disappointed, he could not be offended.

Such, we may add, was the course pursued by Sir Gresham Lorimer throughout the whole term of his mayoralty.

On all hands it was acknowledged that the civic

chair had never been more worthily filled than by its present occupant. High and low spoke well of him. All the distinguished personages with whom he came in contact, or whom it was his pride and privilege to entertain, were unanimous in his praise.

With the Sheriffs, the Aldermen, the Common-Councilmen, the Recorder, the Chamberlain, the Common-Serjeant, the Remembrancer, and all other officials immediately connected with him, he was equally popular. His enemies were few, his friends numberless.

The Lord Mayor's removal from his private residence to the Mansion House took place about a week after his installation. The Lady Mayoress and Millicent went with him, of course; and Prue, notwithstanding her aunt's opposition, was included in the party. Rooms were also assigned to Lady Dawes and Mrs. Chatteris. Indeed, as Captain Chatteris was playing at hide and seek with

his creditors, it behoved his wife—at least she thought so—to place herself under her father's protection.

The almost regal state kept up at the Mansion House, the vast retinue of servants, the receptions, the frequent and superb entertainments, suited the Lady Mayoress and her elder daughters exactly. We cannot say they were particularly popular with their guests, the airs of superiority they gave themselves being well-nigh insupportable; but as their object was to overawe rather than to please, they may be said to have succeeded.

Assisted by her daughters, the Lady Mayoress kept up a kind of court, held levees and drawing-rooms, and had other receptions, to which all who paid her sufficient homage were invited, but from which those who incurred her displeasure were rigorously excluded. But these ostentatious displays were confined to City folk. When ladies of rank honoured the Mansion House with their presence, they were received with overweening at-

tention by its haughty mistress and her daughters. Lady Lorimer knew how to discriminate, she said, between really great people and pretenders, and sometimes submitted patiently to rudenesses equal to those she inflicted on others.

It was an amusing sight, on the evening of some grand entertainment, to see her ladyship in the plenitude of her charms, arrayed in all her finery, powdered, feathered, and loaded with jewels, with her two elder daughters standing beside her equally richly attired, and blazing in diamonds—it was amusing, we say, to see her as the different presentations were made, with what haughtiness she would return the courtesies of some wealthy citizen's wife and daughters, scarcely deigning to look at them, and what delight and empressement she manifested at the approach of a titled dame.

As her ladyship's days passed in a constant routine of this sort, and as she enjoyed some of the pleasures of sovereignty without any of its

cares, she was for the time supremely happy. No doubt there were drawbacks to her entire felicity; but which of her sex, however fortunate or highly placed, can say she is perfectly happy? Lady Lorimer had reached the highest point of her ambition. Homage, little short of that offered to royalty, was paid her on all hands, not by the citizens merely, but by the most distinguished personages of the land; adulation, the most fulsome or the most refined, equally acceptable in either case, was lavished upon her. She was, unquestionably, the first lady in the City, and second to few out of it, she thought. At the Mansion House she was supreme, and when she went abroad in her superb chariot she attracted, or supposed she attracted, universal attention. What was left to attain? Her sole regret was that such a state of things could not endure for ever, and that a time *must* come—a great deal too soon!—when she would be dethroned—when this palace would be

another Lady Mayoress's palace, and when all these bowing crowds, passing her by, would offer their incense to the new divinity. She wisely resolved, therefore, to make the most of her time.

Lady Dawes and Mrs. Chatteris were just as happy as herself. Ever with their mother, they emulated, if not eclipsed, her splendour, shared her triumphs, and did not neglect to make conquests of their own at the same time. One or other always accompanied the Lady Mayoress in her chariot when she went abroad, and both being extremely handsome women, and magnificently dressed, they drew many an admiring eye to the splendid equipage.

Thus the days passed pleasantly with both ladies —so pleasantly, that, like the Lady Mayoress, they quite dreaded their termination, and, like her, determined to enjoy the passing moment.

Mrs. Chatteris was so much engrossed by the round of amusements in which she was engaged,

and had so many other distractions, that she had seldom a thought to bestow on poor dear absent Tom.

Millicent and Prue likewise greatly enjoyed their residence at the Mansion House. Perhaps there was rather too much form and ceremony for them—perhaps, also, the entertainments were too frequent, and on too grand a scale to suit them—still there was so much excitement and variety, that they could not fail to be pleased.

As almost everybody of consequence was invited at some time or other to the Mansion House, the two girls had an opportunity of seeing most of the celebrities of the day, and in some instances of becoming acquainted with them; and as by this time Milly had got rid in a great measure of her shyness, while Prue was lively and talkative enough, both were very much admired—more so, indeed, than was altogether agreeable to Lady Dawes and Mrs. Chatteris, who wondered what people could see in either of them.

Little attention was shown them by the Lady Mayoress, who did not attempt to conceal her dislike of her niece; but this neglect was more than repaired by Sir Gresham, who took especial pains to bring them forward, introducing everybody to them whom he thought they would like to know.

Let us add, that their amiability and good nature soothed and conciliated many who were offended by the haughtiness of the Lady Mayoress and her elder daughters.

III.

A CHANGE IS OBSERVABLE IN PRUE.

ONE circumstance connected with his niece struck the Lord Mayor as singular, and he did not very well know how to account for it.

No sooner was she launched into society than she became easy and well bred. Her rusticity disappeared as if by magic. Either she required no instruction, or there was nothing to teach. Heightened by the rich attire, for which she was indebted to the kindness of her uncle, her charms of person seemed to improve, and her deportment

was so graceful that Sir Gresham could not help commenting upon it.

"Why, where have you learnt all those graces, niece?" he said. "You don't look like a country girl at all. I didn't suppose you had seen society enough at York to form your manner as it seems formed?"

"You flatter me, uncle," she replied, blushing. "Since my arrival in town you have given me abundant opportunities for observation, and I have had my eyes about me, I can assure you."

"You have used them to some purpose," replied the Lord Mayor.

Tradescant was quite as much surprised as his father by Prue's sudden and remarkable alteration of manner, and its effect upon him was stronger than on Sir Gresham. But if the young man thought her wonderfully improved in some respects, there was one change which he did not consider was for the better—she was decidedly more distant towards him, and though amiable as

ever, sought to make him understand that if he fancied she felt any tender interest in him he was mistaken.

"Deuce take the girl! I can't understand her," he mentally ejaculated. "There's no denying that she looks handsomer and more refined than she used to do, but I liked her better as she was."

If we could suspect Prue of any design of fixing her once fickle, and it might be still inconstant cousin, no better plan could have been devised than that which she pursued. In proportion as she became cold and distant Tradescant's ardour increased, until at last the anticipated crisis arrived, and the conquering girl had him at her feet. He told her in the most passionate terms that he loved her, that he had never loved any one but herself, and could not exist without her.

Prue laughed outright at this declaration, which was made during an evening party at the Mansion House in one of the galleries leading to the ball-room, and told him, in reply, that, in spite of his

professions, she was by no means sure of his sincerity; that as to his assertion that she was the first object on which his heart had been fixed, she knew that to be false; and before she could give him the faintest hope of a return of regard she must have proof of his constancy.

What proof did she require? he asked. Her answer was, that she would consider and let him know. But, when subsequently pressed, she refused to decide, so that Tradescant was as far from the attainment of his wishes as ever.

But the flame now raging in his breast was fanned into fury from another quarter. A girl so handsome as Prue could not fail to attract admirers. She had plenty, and some of them, though they received no more encouragement than Tradescant—perhaps not half so much—paid her marked attention. It soon became quite clear that it only rested with herself to make a very advantageous match, and one love-sick swain, a good-looking youth, and of good expectations, the son

of Alderman Cracraft, applied to the Lord Mayor, entreating him to plead his cause with his niece.

In compliance with the young spark's request, Sir Gresham broached the matter to Prue, but her reply was such as at once to crush the aspirant's hopes.

When her uncle, with evidently warm interest, inquired whether her affections were entirely disengaged, she blushed, and begged him not to question her too closely. So Sir Gresham discreetly forbore.

Amongst those who accompanied the Lord Mayor to the Mansion House was Candish. The old man was placed upon the household, and proved so trustworthy and serviceable, that he was regarded by the Lord Mayor as his right hand.

IV.

HOW TRADESCANT REGAINED HIS FATHER'S FAVOUR.

TRADESCANT and Herbert still lodged at the house in Cheapside, though they dined daily at the Lord Mayor's table, and rarely missed any entertainments given at the Mansion House.

From the period at which we last left him to the time when we resume our story, Tradescant had been sedulous in attention to business, and had become so steady and industrious, that there seemed little danger of a relapse into his former idle courses. Manfully resisting all temptations to which he was exposed—and they were not few—

he stuck to his post, and soon mastering the details of the business, took upon himself the management of the concern, and, if Crutchet's word were to be taken, conducted it as well as Sir Gresham himself could have done.

Long before this, we need scarcely say, a reconciliation had taken place between the reformed prodigal and his father. Crutchet had not failed to acquaint Sir Gresham with his son's regular attention to business, and Candish had satisfied him that the young man had abandoned all his idle and profligate courses. Nevertheless, Sir Gresham gave no sign of relenting until sufficient time had elapsed to afford reasonable assurance that his son's reformation was complete.

One day, when Tradescant was alone in the room adjoining the counting-house, in which he now constantly sat, and busily engaged in making up some accounts, Sir Gresham entered with Crutchet, and closed the door softly after him. Not being aware that it was his father who had

come in, Tradescant continued his work without looking up.

"There, sir, there's a sight to do you good!" whispered Crutchet.

Sir Gresham made no reply, for his heart was too full to allow him to speak.

A moment afterwards Tradescant raised his eyes, and perceiving his father, started up and threw himself at his feet.

"Have I your forgiveness, sir?" he cried. "Am I once more your son?"

"Again my son, and dearer to me than ever," replied the Lord Mayor, raising him and tenderly embracing him. "Oh, Tradescant, what joy it is to find you thus worthily employed! How great is my satisfaction in this change! Come to my heart, my dear boy!—come to my heart!" And he strained him once more to his breast.

For some moments there was a silence, which was broken at last by a sort of hysterical laugh proceeding from Crutchet, who vainly attempted

to call out "huzza!" and almost choked himself by the effort.

"Give me your hand, Crutchet—give me your hand!" said the Lord Mayor, in a voice of deep emotion. "I owe my boy's restoration mainly to you."

"Yes, sir, I owe more to Mr. Crutchet than I shall ever be able to repay," said Tradescant. "Had I listened to him you would never have had any cause of complaint against me. I will make no professions; but you may believe me when I affirm that I am heartily ashamed of my follies—to give them their mildest term—and that I will never repeat them."

"Say no more!—say no more!—I am perfectly satisfied," cried Sir Gresham. "All is forgiven —all shall be forgotten."

"I shall never forget this scene to my dying day," said Crutchet, taking off his spectacles, and applying a handkerchief to his eyes.

"A word more ere I dismiss this subject for

ever," pursued the Lord Mayor. "All your debts are paid, so that you are free from embarrassment of any kind."

"As I trust henceforward to remain!" exclaimed Tradescant.

"Go on as you have begun," continued his father. "Attend to business as sedulously as you are now doing, and in another year you shall be master of this concern."

"Promise me nothing till you find I deserve it, sir," replied Tradescant. "But if I can place any dependence on myself I won't disappoint you."

"He won't, Sir Gresham, I'm sure he won't," said Crutchet.

"I believe you," said the Lord Mayor. "And now, go to work, my boy, and God bless you!"

This was all that passed between them on the subject.

V.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT CONFIDES THE STATE OF HIS AFFECTIONS TO CRUTCHET; AND FROM WHICH IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HERBERT MUST BE TAKING TO IDLE HABITS.

MONTHS went by and found no change in Tradescant. The business improved under his management, and every one in the establishment was obliged to confess that a better system and more regularity had been introduced since he had assumed the control of affairs.

"Why, sir, you're a genius! a positive genius!" exclaimed the delighted Crutchet, as they were talking over a successful transaction one morning in the room behind the counting-house. "You've

done wonders. I always knew it was in you, but I feared I mightn't live to see it brought out."

"Ah! my good old friend!" rejoined Trades-cant, "I hope you may live to see me realise all your kindly expectations. But I owe this to you. What should I have been without you?"

"Well, I did the best I could—that I can safely say," rejoined Crutchet; "but though I had the will I hadn't exactly the power. No, sir, the person who made you what you now are is your cousin Prue. She did it, sir—she alone—no one else can claim any merit."

"I feel how much I owe her," sighed Trades-cant.

"Then why not show your gratitude, sir?—why not make her some return?"

"So I would, if I knew how, Crutchet."

"I'll tell you how, sir. Take her to Bow Church, where your father and mother were married. Bring her back here as your bride."

"I should like nothing better, Crutchet," responded the young man.

"Then do it without delay."

"But I don't think she likes me. Ever since she went to the Mansion House she has been extraordinarily cool towards me—quite changed—and repels my advances in a way that almost distracts me."

"Don't be disheartened, sir. Put the question to her in a plain, straightforward, business-like manner that can't be misunderstood, and she'll say 'yes' readily enough, I'll warrant her."

"I have put the question several times, Crutchet, and have been as constantly baffled. She won't give me a direct answer, so that I am just where I was at first. For the last three months she has led me a pretty dance, and more than once I've resolved to break with her, but I never can. I did think of absenting myself from the Mansion House to-day, but I should be wretched if I did so. Not having seen much of her of late,

you don't know what a fine lady she has become, and how surprisingly handsome she looks. I almost wish she were not so good-looking, for she attracts a host of admirers, and one of them may carry her off. It's true she has refused young Cracraft, and Mr. Deputy Hodges, and half a dozen others, I believe."

"She'll refuse 'em all," rejoined Crutchet. "She means to have you, and no one else—only she'll take her own time about it."

"I wish I could persuade myself so," observed Tradescant; "but I can't free myself from anxiety."

"It's the nature of lovers to be anxious, sir—at least, so I've heard, for I can't speak from experience, never having been in love myself. But cheer up! all will come right in the end. If you want an advocate with Miss Prue—though I don't think one can be needed—why don't you enlist your sister in your behalf?"

"I've tried to do so, but Milly declines to interfere."

"Then, take my word, it's a plan made up between 'em. Miss Prue is playing with you as a fisherman plays with a trout he has safely hooked —but try to escape, and she'll land you fast enough."

"If I thought so!——But no! I daren't make the attempt."

There was a pause, after which Crutchet remarked with some hesitation, "Talking of Miss Prue, sir, have you remarked that her brother is not quite so attentive to business as he used to be?"

"I have noticed the change, Crutchet—much to my regret—though I've said nothing about it to you. I hope Herbert isn't going to take the part I've thrown up."

"Mercy on us! I hope not," exclaimed Crutchet, with a countenance of surprise and alarm. "But what makes you have any such fear?"

"I'll tell you. He has lately become intimate with Mr. Wilkes, Tom Potter, and the set who

helped to get me into difficulties, and if he doesn't take care they'll entangle him."

He hasn't much to lose, that's one comfort, sir,' observed Crutchet.

"True," replied Tradescant; "but neither had I, and yet—I shame to say it!—I managed to get rid of a vast deal of money.'

"Mr. Herbert won't have the same chance, sir I shan't lend him any."

"I hope not, Crutchet. Take care of what you've got, and never risk it again. But I sincerely trust he won't become a gamester, or take to dissolute ways. I regard him as a brother, and should feel it deeply if he went wrong."

"I think you may make yourself easy about the gambling, sir. Mr. Herbert's a great deal too cautious, in my opinion, to play deeply, or to play at all. Neither do I think it likely, from his general habits, that he will plunge into any excesses, but what I lament is that he has begun to show a decided distaste for business—that he

dresses more extravagantly than he used to do, and gives himself more airs."

"Bad symptoms, Crutchet — bad symptoms!" exclaimed Tradescant. After a pause, as if he had suddenly formed a resolution, he added, "I'll speak to him. Is he in the counting-house now?"

"Lord love you! no, sir—not he! He seldom makes his appearance before twelve o'clock, and not always then. But you'll find him in his own room, if you want to see him. His valet, Tiplady —your valet once, sir—came down a short time ago, to inquire for letters and the morning paper, and said his master was then at his toilette."

"At his toilette at this hour! Why, he's as bad as I was. And then to think of his engaging that pert rascal, Tip, whom I was only too glad to get rid of! What does a man of business want with a valet?"

"I'm sure I can't tell, sir," replied Crutchet. "I don't want one, and if I did, I should certainly

never engage such a conceited coxcomb as Tiplady."

"Come with me to the silly fellow's room, Crutchet, and let us try to reason him out of his folly."

"With all my heart, sir," replied the other.

VI.

TEL MAITRE, TEL VALET.

SINCE the Lord Mayor's removal to the Mansion House, a suite of handsome apartments had been allotted to Herbert, and in one of these Tradescant and Crutchet found Tiplady lolling upon a sofa, and reading the morning paper. The valet either did not hear them enter, or pretended not to do so, for he continued his occupation, until Tradescant called out, "When you have finished with the newspaper, sirrah, I will thank you to let your master know that Mr. Crutchet and myself desire to speak with him."

"Pray excuse me, sir," replied the unabashed valet, springing to his feet and bowing. Tiplady, we may remark, was very smartly attired in one of the suits of clothes bestowed upon him by Tradescant Still keeping his eye upon the paper, he went on: "I was reading the list of the eminent personages who kissed hands at St. James's yesterday, on being created English peers. I delight in court news, sir. Shall I run over the list?"

Tradescant replied by a gesture of impatience.

"Here's a piece of intelligence that can't fail to interest you, sir," pursued the imperturbable valet. "'APPROACHING FESTIVITIES AT THE MANSION HOUSE. The Easter Banquet, we understand, will be on a scale of unprecedented magnificence. Their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of York and Cumberland, with the First Lord of the Treasury and the rest of the Cabinet Ministers, and several of the chief nobility, will honour the Lord Mayor with their company on the occasion.

The Ball to be given by the Lady Mayoress will be unusually brilliant.' "

"Put down the paper, rascal, and do as I have bidden you," cried Tradescant.

"Allow me to read you one more interesting paragraph," persevered the valet. "This is worth listening to. 'CURIOUS CONFESSION—A MAN WRONGFULLY IMPRISONED.—James Archer, recently executed at Chester for forgery, confessed that the crime that weighed heaviest on his conscience was having been instrumental in causing the wrongful imprisonment of a fellow-clerk. As the circumstance occurred nearly forty years ago, and the unfortunate man is presumed to be dead, it is too late to make any reparation for the terrible injury done him.' There's more of it, sir."

"I won't hear it," cried Tradescant, snatching the paper from him. "Go to your master at once."

"There's no sort of hurry, sir," replied Tiplady.

"My master won't have done dressing for ten minutes."

"Tell him I'm here, and that will make him more expeditious."

"I don't think it will, sir. He's nearly as particular about his toilette as you used to be when you were——I beg pardon, sir—I was merely about to observe, that my master generally takes his time."

"So do you, rascal," cried Tradescant, "and that of other people as well. Do as I bid you without delay, or I'll quicken your movements."

"I'm extremely reluctant to disturb my master," rejoined Tiplady. "But I suppose I must do it."

And moving leisurely towards the door of an inner chamber, he went in.

"And this is the way, I suppose, that that impudent puppy treated people when he served me," remarked Tradescant. "A proof, I fear, that in his master I shall find a reflex of my former self."

Crutchet said nothing, but shook his head ominously.

At this moment Tiptady reappeared.

"Just as I expected, sir," said the valet. "My master has made but little progress with his toilette, and will be obliged to detain you longer than may be agreeable. Some other time, perhaps, may suit you better. Excessively sorry, sir—excessively sorry!" he added, looking as if he wished to bow them out.

But in this he was disappointed, for Tradescant threw himself on the sofa, saying, "I will wait. I mean to see him now."

"Quite right, sir," observed Crutchet, in a tone of approval.

"But my master is expecting a gentleman to call upon him every minute, sir—every minute," rejoined the valet.

"The rascal evidently wants to get rid of us," observed Tradescant aside to Crutchet. "Harkye,

sirrah!" he added to Tiplady. "Whom does your master expect? Mr. Potter, or Mr. Wilkes, eh?"

"No, sir, but both those gentlemen were here yesterday. Odd, sir, that most of your old acquaintance should now be my master's acquaintance! But the gentleman he now expects is a stranger—a Mr. Winter—from Yorkshire, I believe, sir."

"Winter! I never heard of him," rejoined Tradescant. "Who and what is he?"

"Oh lud, sir, I can't enlighten you; but I believe he's elderly, and my master told me to be particularly civil to him—that's all I know."

"Well, perhaps we shall see him," observed Tradescant.

"Then you are determined to wait, sir?"

"Quite determined. I shan't stir till I see your master."

"Very good, sir. But suppose Mr. Winter should come?"

"Suppose he should! Show him into another room."

"Contrary to orders, sir. I was expressly told to bring him here. If you want a private interview, I would really recommend you to postpone it to a more convenient opportunity. After my master has done with Mr. Winter, he is going with Sir Felix Bland to St. Mary-axe, to call on Mrs. Walworth and her daughter."

"What! has he renewed his intimacy with them?" cried Tradescant.

"Perhaps I ought not to have mentioned it," replied Tiplady; "but i'faith! my master is very attentive to Miss Walworth, and it wouldn't surprise me," taking out a snuff-box and helping himself to a pinch of rappee, "it wouldn't surprise me if they made a match of it, after all."

"But it would surprise me, rascal," cried Tradescant, angrily. "And I desire you won't take any more liberties with your master's name, or

with that of any lady with whom he may be acquainted. Leave the room instantly, sir."

And seeing he was in earnest, the valet thought proper to comply, though he marched out very consequentially.

"I hope this last piece of information is not correct," observed Tradescant. "I should be sorry if Herbert were to marry Alice Walworth. I had other views in regard to him."

"I can partly guess what they were," said Crutchet; "and I trust they may yet be realised."

At this moment the door of the inner room opened, and the young gentleman under discussion came forth.

VII.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT READS HERBERT A LECTURE.

HERBERT looked extremely well, and had now quite the air of a man of fashion. There was no foppery in his manner, but he was attired in a light-blue velvet coat laced with silver, and having silver button-holes, and the rest of his costume was equally elegant.

"I must apologise for detaining you," he said, saluting them, "but I was in the very midst of my toilette when you were announced."

"I must compliment you upon the result,

Herbert," replied Tradescant. "You put us quiet folk to shame. You and I seem to have changed parts like two actors in a comedy."

"Faith, it looks very much like it," replied Herbert. "Your former valet, Tip, is now my valet. Your former tailor, Buckmaster, is now my tailor. Your friseur, Le Gros, is my perruquier. And some of your old friends are now my friends."

"The latter, I fear, will do you no good," replied Tradescant, gravely. "You once cautioned me against them, Herbert, and in return I caution you."

"I find them very amusing," said Herbert.

"Yes, they are amusing, I admit, but therein lies the danger. They'll soon laugh you out of your good habits and principles, lead you into a hundred needless expenses, make you ashamed of your business, and teach you to game."

"Oh no, they've tried that," replied Herbert, "but it won't do with me. Now and then, indeed,

I play a rubber at whist—but never for more than guinea points."

"Guinea points!" exclaimed Crutchet, holding up his hands. "Monstrous!"

"And then I never bet—so I can't lose much."

"Excuse me, Herbert," said Tradescant, with increasing gravity, "if I venture to tell you that your present mode of life is irreconcilable with the situation you occupy in this house, and that something more is expected from you by my father than you seem inclined to perform."

"Very justly remarked, sir—very justly remarked," observed Crutchet.

"Really, my dear Tradescant," said Herbert, in a careless tone, "if the object of your visit was merely to read me a lecture, you needn't have given yourself the trouble to wait so long. Any other time would have done for its delivery. You manage the concern so admirably yourself, that I am relieved from the necessity of any particular attention to it."

"There you're wrong, sir," observed Crutchet. "There's plenty for you to do, if you will but do it."

"I am fully equal to the management of the concern, Herbert," said Tradescant, "but that is not the point. You must either work or play—take your choice. My father, as you are aware, at the end of the year, contemplates taking you into partnership—or rather, I imagine, retiring, and leaving the concern to me and you. Self-interest, then, must make it clear that you are pursuing the wrong course at present, and may forfeit the chance."

"I am greatly beholden to my uncle for his consideration," pursued Herbert, "and also to you, Tradescant; but I scarcely think I shall take advantage of the offer."

"What, decline a partnership in one of the first houses in the City!" exclaimed Crutchet. "Such folly is incredible."

"What on earth do you mean to do?" demanded Tradescant.

"Hum!—I hardly know. Perhaps marry."

"Go through the same process that I did with Alice Walworth, eh—and experience the same result?"

"No, I shall go more prudently to work than you did. So you have heard that I have renewed my intimacy in that quarter, eh? Alice and I have made up our differences, and are better friends than ever."

"And can you really think of marrying her, Herbert?"

"Why not? You once thought of marrying her yourself. I needn't specify her recommendations."

"She won't suit you. Better stick to business. In due time, I have no doubt, you will find a suitable wife, calculated to make you happy."

"Excellent advice, sir!" exclaimed Crutchet, approvingly. "It does me good to hear you talk thus."

"It makes me smile," observed Herbert. "To

speak truth, I'm not so fond of business as I used to be. I cannot spend all my life in a counting-house, talking to book-keepers and shopmen, examining accounts, and occupying myself with stupid correspondence. Upon my soul, I can't do it."

"Hear me, Herbert," said Tradescant. "I give you my word that I was never half so happy in my days of indolence and so-called luxury as I am now. Formerly I was listless and indifferent to everything, and required constant excitement of the strongest kind to rouse me into life. Pleasure palled upon me. Then, I could hardly get through the day—now, it is too short for what I have to do. Having become practically aware of the difference between an idle and active existence, even as affecting the spirits, to say nothing of the beneficial results of the latter course, I wouldn't be what I was again for worlds. You don't believe me now, but you'll find it out in time."

"Well, perhaps I may," said Herbert.

"What a change for the worse, to be sure!"

groaned Crutchet. "Why, when you first entered the counting-house, which you now profess to dislike so much, I thought we had got a treasure, and I told your uncle so. 'Mr. Herbert's a steady, hard-working young man, sir,' I said to him; 'he'll make his way in the world.' What sort of character must I give you now?"

"Just such as I deserve," replied Herbert, laughing; "neither better nor worse. Don't conceal anything from my uncle, I beg of you."

"Must I tell him you have become too fine to attend to the shop; that you come late and leave early; that you have ceased to look into the books and reply to the correspondence; that you scarcely deign to speak to the book-keepers, and never address the shopmen or 'prentices? Shall I tell him all this?"

"Tell him whatever you please, Crutchet," replied Herbert, indifferently.

"Then I know what the result will be," ob-

served Crutchet. "Be advised by me. Change your plans. It won't do, sir—it won't do."

"Is this the way the worthy fellow used to preach to you formerly, Tradescant?" inquired Herbert. "If so, no wonder you found him a bore."

"Mercy on us! that this dreadful malady should break out in another member of the family!" mentally ejaculated Crutchet.

"It has been one of my chief regrets that I so little heeded what Mr. Crutchet said to me," said Tradescant, in a tone of stern rebuke; "but if you have any regard for my father's good opinion, you will alter your present mode of life."

"I have the greatest regard for my uncle," replied Herbert, "and should be sorry to sink in his opinion. But I have no idea of deceiving him, and, therefore, beg Mr. Crutchet to tell him the exact truth respecting me."

"I should be loth to communicate such disa-

greeable intelligence to Sir Gresham, sir. I know it would greatly surprise and shock him."

"I am sure it would," said Tradescant. "As long as possible he must be spared the pain of the disclosure. I therefore forbid you to say anything about it to him for the present, Crutchet. Herbert, it is to be hoped, will not be so ill-advised as to destroy his future prospects. I must get your sister to exert her influence over you," he added to his cousin.

"Prue is aware of my dislike to the business," observed Herbert; "and she is also aware of my intention to withdraw from the concern."

"But she cannot approve of such a step?" cried Tradescant, in surprise.

"She does not express any opinion. She leaves me to act as I think proper."

"You amaze me! She cannot be indifferent on a point of such vital importance to yourself. She must know that you are throwing away a fortune, and that you have nothing else to fall back upon."

"Nothing, except a wealthy marriage," rejoined Herbert, laughing. "She knows all; and has perfect confidence in my judgment."

"More than I have," muttered Crutchet.

At this moment the door was opened by Tiplady, who announced Mr. Winter.

VIII.

MR. WINTER.

THE elderly individual who entered the room immediately after this announcement, had quite the air of a country gentleman. His round, ruddy countenance, redolent of health and good humour, his old-fashioned gold-laced cocked-hat, his plain bob-wig, his ample cravat, his loose green weather-stained riding-coat, and brown top-boots, which had evidently seen some service, proclaimed his condition. Though evidently nearer seventy than sixty, he did not seem to have an ailment, but looked good for another ten years. From the

jovial expression of his features, and the portliness of his person, it was clear he was no enemy to good cheer, but he must have managed by hard exercise —on horseback no doubt—to set gout and other disorders at defiance. The sonorousness of his voice and the heartiness of the laughter in which he constantly indulged showed that his lungs were unimpaired. His features were handsome and prepossessing, and it was really pleasant to look upon such a hearty, hilarious old fellow. He carried a gold-headed cane, but more for ornament than use (probably, in lieu of the customary riding-whip), since it was manifest, from his erect carriage and the sturdiness of his gait, that he did not need its support.

On entering, he took off his cocked-hat, and bowed to each of the company.

"Welcome, sir!—welcome to town!" Herbert cried, hastening towards him, and shaking hands with him very heartily. "I hope you have had a pleasant journey."

"Pretty middling, lad, pretty middling," replied the old gentleman. "Two days in a po'-chaise is more than I can stand. I made the lads drive as fast as they could, but they had but poor cattle. Rot me! if I was ever so tired in my days. I've not got the stiffness out of my legs and back yet. I was stopped by the Flying Highwayman near Barnet. The rogue got ten guineas out of me, but I managed to hide my pocket-book. He rode a thorough-bred bay—a racer, I should think, by the look of him. The horse took my fancy so much that I offered to buy him, but the rascal swore he wouldn't sell him for a thousand pounds. Maybe, the horse was worth that to him. Gad! how I wished for my blunderbuss to settle accounts with the villain. However, here I am, safe and sound, and ready to take my seat in the House. You heard of the result of the contest? Two hundred a head of my opponent, Sir Mark Coverdale. Think of that, my boy. And how are you, Herbert? Oddsflesh! they've smartened you up

in Lunnun. Why, you're grown quite a beau—ha! ha! ha!"

And he burst into a laugh, so loud and boisterous as to prevent reply from Herbert. On recovering himself, the old gentleman went on: "Body o' me! how Lunnun is changed to be sure! When I first caught sight of the great smoky City from Highgate-hill, I thought the place looked just as I had left it upwards of forty years ago, but as I sallied forth from the Saracen's Head this morning to look about me, hang me if I knew where I was, or which way to go—everything seemed so strange. Bow Church, it's true, looks much as it did — and this house doesn't seem greatly changed—I recollect it in old Tradescant's days—but farther on, when I looked for Stocks-market, where I used to buy strawberries and cherries when a boy, and stare at old Rowley's statue over the conduit, when I looked for the old place I found the Mansion House. Now, the Mansion House may be a fine building—it is a

very fine building—but I would rather have seen the old market."

There was something in Mr. Winter's voice, looks, and manners, that produced an indescribable effect upon Tradescant. He fancied he had seen him before, but as the old gentleman declared he had not been in town for upwards of forty years, that was impossible. Again, on scrutinising Mr. Winter's features, he thought he could trace a likeness between him and Herbert, and even between the old gentleman and his own father—but this must surely be imaginary.

But if Tradescant was puzzled, Crutchet was still more so. From the moment of the stranger's entrance, his curiosity had been strongly excited concerning him. Keeping his eyes upon him, he listened attentively to all Mr. Winter said, and the old gentleman's observations increased his astonishment and perplexity.

At last he whispered to Tradescant, "If I didn't know your uncle, Godfrey Lorimer, was

dead, I should declare he was standing before us."

"Oddsflesh! Herbert, you are mighty well lodged here, I must say," observed Mr. Winter, glancing admiringly round the room. "Ah! there's a portrait of Sir Gresham over the fireplace, I perceive; very like, I'll be sworn, though I haven't seen him since he was younger than you are. And how is he?—how is your worthy uncle?"

"Never better, sir—he bears the fatigues of office wonderfully well," replied Herbert. "But allow me to present you to his son," he added, leading the old gentleman towards the others. "Tradescant, give me leave to introduce to you Mr. Winter—my maternal uncle and guardian."

"His maternal uncle!" mentally ejaculated Tradescant; "that explains the likeness I detected between the old gentleman and himself, but not between the old gentleman and my father. Sir, I am very glad to see you—very glad indeed,"

he added, shaking hands cordially with Mr. Winter.

"Sir, you are exceedingly obliging," rejoined the other. "Let me look at you for a moment," he added, scanning the young man's features. "Ay, ay, a handsome lad," he muttered, "a handsome lad! but not much of a Lorimer—must be like his mother. I've heard of you, sir, from my —from Herbert here—but zookers! you don't answer a bit to the description. He told me you were a buck of the first head, but oddsflesh! Herbert looks the bigger buck of the two—ha! ha!"

And he burst into one of his uproarious fits of laughter.

"That was some time ago, sir—when I first came to town," interposed Herbert, as soon as he could. "Tradescant is very much changed since then."

"So it seems," replied Winter. "And so you

are very much changed—but not in the same way —since you left Yorkshire."

"I hope you don't disapprove of my style of dress, sir?" said Herbert.

"Humph!—à la mode, no doubt—but I like Tradescant's better. Beg pardon, young gentleman, I'm taking great liberty with your name—but it's my way."

"No liberty at all, Mr. Winter. I look upon you as a relation—as almost an uncle."

"Gad, sir, you do me great honour. I should be proud to call you nephew. Herbert didn't speak half so favourably of you as he ought."

"Sir, I beg——" cried the young man referred to.

"Not half so favourably as Prue," pursued Winter, disregarding the interruption; "and I find she was much nearer the truth."

"Did she give me a good character, sir?"

cried Tradescant. "I set the greatest value upon Prue's good opinion."

"I'll tell you what she said," rejoined Winter. "She described you, as Herbert did, as a very fine gentleman, somewhat addicted to gaming, and rather too fond of pleasure; but she added—which Herbert didn't—that you were certain to reform. And I perceive by the sobriety of your dress and deportment that the girl was right."

"Sir," broke in Crutchet, unable to restrain himself, "I have the pleasure to inform you that Mr. Tradescant Lorimer is entirely reformed. There isn't a steadier young gentleman than he is, or a better man of business, in Cheapside, or in the whole city of London. I wish I could say as much for your nephew and ward, Mr. Herbert."

"Why, zounds! you dog,—what's this I hear?" cried Winter, turning to Herbert, with a comical expression of anger. "Aren't you steady? Don't

you attend to business?—don't you stick to the shop, eh?"

"I have made the discovery, sir, that a mercantile life is not exactly my vocation," rejoined Herbert. "Nature never intended me for a draper."

"And what the deuce did nature intend you for?" demanded Winter, pretending to be still more enraged. "For a useless, worthless, idle, trifling puppy, eh? Is pleasure your vocation, sirrah? Why, you told me your worthy uncle had taken you into the concern, and meant to make you a partner if you conducted yourself properly."

"Very true, sir—so he did. I am still in the concern; but I own I don't like the business."

"Oh! you're too proud for it, eh? You've got some fine acquaintances, I make no doubt, who twit you about the shop——"

"That's it, sir—that's it," cried Crutchet. "No one could promise better than Mr. Herbert; but he

has rather disappointed us of late. Mr. Tradescant and I were just remonstrating with him when you came in."

"Never fear! I'll work a change in him. I'll bring him to his senses," cried Winter, winking at Herbert.

"I'm glad to hear you speak so confidently, sir," observed Crutchet. "Nothing has been said to Sir Gresham. If Mr. Herbert will but attend, all may yet be right."

"Oddsflesh! I'll make him," cried Winter, shaking his stick at Herbert. "This is the argument I shall employ. But whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"Tobias Crutchet, at your service, sir — for many years assistant to Sir Gresham."

"What, Old Bow Bells!" exclaimed Winter. "Glad to see you, sir. Shake hands."

"I think, sir, we've met before," said Crutchet, giving his hand respectfully to the old gentleman;

"but it must have been a long time ago, since you've not been in London — as I heard you remark just now—for upwards of forty years, and I've never been out of it at all."

"If we ever have met before, Mr. Crutchet, it must have been when we were a good deal younger than we now are, that's certain," rejoined Winter; "but I've heard of you from Prue. She told me of your nickname, and it tickled my fancy amazingly. Is it possible you've never been out of Lunnun, eh?"

"Never beyond the sound of Bow Bells, sir," rejoined Crutchet; "and never shall be—if I can help it—to my dying day. I'm a thorough Cockney, and persuade myself there can be nothing half so pleasant as this crowded city. But I grieve over some changes. For instance, I miss Stocks-market."

"Ay, so do I, Bow Bells. Excuse me, but I like the name. You remember the old statue over

the conduit—Charles the Second—Sobieski?—ha! ha! ha! I've often laughed at it with Gresham——Zounds! what am I talking about?"

"Have you been to Bucklersbury, sir?" inquired Crutchet.

"Ay, to be sure—no—why do you ask?" cried Winter, getting very red in the face.

"I thought you would like to see the old house. It's still there, sir."

Crutchet watched the effect of this remark, and secretly enjoyed the old gentleman's confusion. Mr. Winter, however, made no reply, but turning to Herbert, said, "I thought Prue was to be here. Isn't she coming?"

"I expect her every moment," rejoined the young man. "Ah! here she is!" he added, as the door was opened by Tiplady, and Prue and Milly entered the room.

IX.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT AND CRUTCHET ARE STILL MORE PUZZLED BY THE OLD GENTLEMAN.

UTTERING an exclamation of delight, Prue flew towards the old gentleman, who caught her in his arms, and kissed her affectionately.

"How fond she seems of her uncle, sir," remarked Crutchet in a low voice to Tradescant.

"Her uncle! hang me! if I know what to think of it," rejoined the young man.

"And so you are come at last, sir?" said Prue, in a tone of playful reproach, as she disengaged herself from the old gentleman's embrace. "You ought to have been here three months ago."

"I know I ought, lass," replied Winter. "But I've had so much to do at Sutton that I couldn't get away for the life of me. And latterly there has been this confounded election—that took up a month, besides costing a mint of money."

"You don't want excuses, I find, sir. However, I'm enchanted to hear of your return for the East Riding, and not sorry you did delay your journey to town. My time has passed most delightfully at the Mansion House—such splendid banquets—such grand balls—such receptions—such brilliant company—everybody you ever heard of, or could desire to see—and the Lord Mayor is so kind, and so generous—and such a dear good uncle—and I love him so much—he thinks of everything, even to one's very dresses. This was his last present. 'Tis what we call an Italian Polonese. How do you like it, sir?"

"I can't tell," replied the old gentleman. "What you say about the Lord Mayor makes

my eyes water. I long to see him, and thank him for all his goodness. How does he look, lass?—does he wear well, eh?"

"Wear well! Yes, sir. He looks as hearty as you do—I can't say more."

"Ay, but I'm his senior by seven years——"

"Hush! sir," exclaimed Prue, placing her fingers on her lips.

"Zooks! I was very near letting the cat out of the bag!" rejoined the old gentleman, with a laugh.

"Did you mark that, sir?" whispered Crutchet to Tradescant. "Your uncle Godfrey was just seven years older than your father."

"Now I can look at you, lass," cried Winter, examining Prue's attire. "An Italian Polonese, eh? By the maskins! but it's woundy fine. You'll astonish them when you go back to Sutton Hall."

"But I'm not going back to Sutton Hall—not

at present, at all events," she replied. "The Lord Mayor doesn't want to part with me, and I can't tear myself from the Mansion House."

"I'm not surprised, considering its attractions," rejoined Winter; "but in my opinion it's something stronger even than the Mansion House attractions that makes you desire to stay. But who's the lovely girl you've got with you? Stay! don't tell me! let me guess—either I'm no judge, or 'tis Milly!"

"You are right, sir, it is Milly," replied the young lady in question. "And very glad I am to see you."

"I felt sure I couldn't be mistaken," said Winter, kissing her. "Excuse me, my dear. It's a way we old fellows have in Yorkshire."

"Oh! sir, you're quite welcome. I'm not at all offended," replied Milly, playfully presenting her cheek to him.

"Zounds! then I'll have another," he cried, kissing her again.

"Miss Milly's in the plot. I told you so, sir. She knows him," whispered Crutchet to Tradescant.

"You described Milly so exactly, Prue," pursued Winter, "that I knew her in a moment—but you said she was rather timid and shy. Now, I don't find her so at all."

"I ought not to be shy with you, sir," said Milly, smiling.

"No, i'faith," cried Winter. "I'm a sort of uncle, you know—your aunt's brother, that's it—ha! ha! I've explained the relationship to Tradescant," he added, with a wink.

"Oh! then he understands it?" said Prue, laughing.

"Perhaps better than you think," mentally ejaculated Tradescant.

"I suppose, my dear, there would be no use in asking you to come and see us in Yorkshire?" observed Winter to Milly. "You won't like such a dull life as ours, after all the gaieties of the

Mansion House. And yet we might be able to offer you some amusement in the autumn. Yorkshire is a fine county, and Sutton Hall is a beautiful old place—though I say it that should not—embosomed in noble woods—with the Ouse flowing through the park—and we're only ten miles from York—so you can drive there as often as you please."

"What the deuce does he mean?" muttered Crutchet. "Godfrey Lorimer could never be member for the East Riding of Yorkshire, have an old hall, and a well-timbered park with the Ouse flowing through it. I'm perplexed again."

"Will you come and see us at Sutton, my dear?" said the old gentleman to Milly.

"With the greatest pleasure," she replied. "Your description of the place enchants me. Prue has often talked to me about the old house, and has made me long to behold it. I've never tried the country, but I'm sure I should like it better than town."

"Ay, that you will," cried Winter. "Odds-flesh! you don't know half the pleasures of a country life; but I'll give you a taste of them. I'll find you plenty of recreation. You shall hunt, course, practise archery, angle—manage the flower-garden, and the bees, and the poultry and doves, and have an easy-going nag to ride upon."

"Charming!" exclaimed Milly. "Everything you mention is to my taste. I quite long to be at Sutton."

"What! can you tear yourself away from the Mansion House?"

"Country life and country enchantments, such as you paint them, would please me infinitely more, sir."

"Then as soon as the session is over, if the Lord Mayor will spare you, you shall go down with me. Since Prue is so enamoured of the Mansion House, she may remain behind, but as Herbert doesn't like business, he shall go with us."

"You must excuse me, sir. I can't leave town."

"Heyday! what's this!" cried Winter. "Not leave town—but you shall, sir. What's the meaning of that smile? You've got some scheme afoot."

"Right, sir. I'm thinking of marrying."

"Marrying!" exclaimed Winter. "You'll ask my consent, I hope. And pray, sir, who are you thinking of marrying?"

"The daughter of a wealthy hosier in St. Mary-axe, Alice Walworth by name. A very pretty girl, with a plum to her fortune."

"Pretty, certainly," observed Prue, "but a downright coquette, as Herbert knows from experience, since he has already been jilted by her."

"Ha! how was that?" inquired Winter.

"It's too long a story to tell now, sir," rejoined Prue, "but the sum of it is, that after encouraging Herbert, Alice Walworth engaged herself to Tradescant, who had a narrow escape of being made miserable for life; and now Herbert has been foolish enough to renew his suit, chiefly by the

representations of a silly old alderman, Sir Felix Bland."

"I see! I see! the plum is the sole attraction, eh? The dog is a fortune-hunter."

"Let him deny it if he can," said Prue.

"I shan't attempt to deny it, sir," rejoined Herbert. "I don't profess any extraordinary affection for the girl. But my excellent friend Sir Felix Bland—a very shrewd, sensible man of the world, whatever Prue may allege to the contrary, and who knows Alice intimately—assures me she has many charming qualities, and is decidedly the greatest catch in the City."

"A fiddlestick's end for her charming qualities! She may be a great catch, but she shan't catch you. You shan't marry her, sir."

"Pray don't be so peremptory, sir. Suspend your judgment till you see her."

"Not a moment. I have other views for you."

Here Sir Felix Bland was announced by Tip lady.

"I'm glad Sir Felix is come," cried Herbert. "He'll soon make you alter your opinion, sir."

"No he won't," replied the old gentleman, resolutely. "You shan't have her, I tell you."

X.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT APPEALS TO MR. WINTER.

THE little alderman was in raptures at beholding the young ladies, and of course directed his first attentions to them, overwhelming them with high-flown compliments and adulation.

"Upon my word, Miss Prue," he said, "I have to charge you with great cruelty. You inflict wounds with those bright eyes that can't be cured —except by yourself. A score of my friends are dying for you, and they all declare you won't take compassion upon them. I can't tell how it is that so many of your admirers come to me. They

will have it that I possess an influence with you, though I assure them to the contrary."

"There you are wrong, Sir Felix. You have great influence with me, and if I could be persuaded to listen to any of those gentlemen it would be by you."

"Then let me be the deputy of three deputies —to wit, Mr. Deputy Hodge, Mr. Deputy Wadling, and Mr. Deputy Sidebottom. May I give one of them a hope?"

"No, Sir Felix—not the slightest."

"Ah! I see how it is—heart pre-occupied. I must find out the fortunate individual. Whoever he may be he is greatly to be envied."

"A very gallant old gentleman," observed Winter, who had been listening to the discourse.

"A stranger, I perceive," said Sir Felix, noticing Winter. "Who is he?"

"Mr. Winter, my uncle and guardian," replied Prue. "Permit me to present him to you."

And she did the honours accordingly.

"Most happy to make your acquaintance, my dear Mr. Winter," said Sir Felix, after the introduction had taken place. "From the country, I presume, sir?"

"From Yorkshire, sir," replied the old gentleman — "just arrived—come to Lunnun to take my seat in parliament, and look after these young folks—ha! ha!"

"Very right, my dear sir—very right. I am sure it must gratify a kindly nature like yours—for your nature is evidently kindly, Mr. Winter—to find them looking so well. Your niece is greatly admired, and has made a hundred conquests, and as to your nephew, I might say more in his praise if he weren't present. Allow me to offer you a pinch of snuff, my dear Mr. Winter. Your nephew is destined to cut a figure in the world. A fortune lies before him—a great fortune. He's likely to make an excellent match—to carry off one of the wealthiest of our City belles. D'ye take, my dear sir?"

"Yes, I take," replied the old gentleman, rather gruffly. "All this sounds very fine, Sir Felix. But there happens to be a material objection. I've got some one else in view for him."

"Pooh! my dear sir, this is straining your power as guardian rather too far. Your nephew will have a right to complain. You must allow him to decide for himself on a point where his happiness is concerned."

"Why, so he shall, but if he doesn't decide as I wish him, I'll dis——"

"Hold, sir," cried Herbert, checking him. "All I ask you is to see Alice Walworth and judge."

"Yes, see her and judge," said Sir Felix. "I know what your verdict will be. A testy old curmudgeon," he added, walking aside with Herbert. "But we'll get over his objections. But how comes it you never told me you had a guardian—and such a guardian as this old fellow—a member of parliament, eh?"

"I'll explain all at a more convenient opportunity," replied Herbert.

"And so you have made a great many conquests, eh, Prue?" said Winter, turning towards her.

"More than Sir Felix has mentioned, sir," observed Tradescant, joining them.

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the old gentleman, looking hard at him. "Whom has Sir Felix neglected to mention?"

"Perhaps Prue will tell you herself, sir."

"Nay, I'm sure I don't know," replied the young lady, laughing. "Several persons have tried to persuade me they are in love with me, but I didn't believe them."

"Oddsbobs, girl!" exclaimed Winter, "I believe you are growing a coquette."

"Not I, in truth, sir," she rejoined. "You mustn't blame me if I don't believe all I hear. I don't trifle with any one's affections."

"There I must flatly contradict you, Prue,"

said Tradescant. "You trifle sadly with mine. You won't give me an answer."

"How can I give you one, when I can't make up my mind?" she replied. "You would not be content with 'No,' and I'm not prepared to say 'Yes.'"

"Then I must appeal to your guardian to bring you to a decision," said Tradescant. "When he learns how devotedly attached I am to you, and how anxiously I have striven to approve my love, I am sure he will espouse my cause."

"Ay, that I will—heartily," replied Winter. "You speak out like a man. Prue's not the girl I take her for, if she doesn't decide in your favour."

"But you have always indulged me, sir, and let me have my own way—so I must have it now," she rejoined, playfully.

"This is ever the case, sir," cried Tradescant, with a look of disappointment. "Impossible to bring her to the point. Your authority may do it, sir—nothing else can."

"The girl has some object, I can see," thought Winter. "I mustn't interfere with her. My authority," he added aloud. "Oddsflesh! I've no control over her. She always does what she likes. But thus much I'll say, if she won't have you, she shall have no one else—with my consent, at all events."

"That's saying a great deal too much, sir," rejoined Prue, laughing. "You exercise undue coercion."

"Why not give the lad a direct answer?" demanded Winter.

"I'm not bound to offer reasons for anything I do," she replied. "I claim my sex's privilege of irresponsibility. If I am pressed now, my decision may be unfavourable. Leave me to myself, and my consent may possibly—mind, I only say possibly—be won. But a good deal depends——"

"Upon what?" cried Tradescant.

"Upon Herbert. If he marries Alice Walworth, I shan't marry at all."

"If that's the only difficulty, I'll answer for its removal," observed Winter.

At this moment the door again opened, and Mr. Candish entered the room. He stopped on seeing it so full of company, and seemed half inclined to withdraw.

XI.

DISCLOSURES.

"GAD a mercy!" exclaimed Winter, staring at Candish as if thunderstruck, "who's that?"

"One of my father's household," replied Tradescant. "Do you want me, Mr. Candish?"

"Yes, sir," replied the person addressed. "I have been to the counting-house, and was told you were in Mr. Herbert's room, so I came here in search of you. I've a note for you from the Lord Mayor."

"Give it me," replied Tradescant.

Candish stepped towards him, but on perceiving

Mr. Winter he started, and stood as if transfixed. The note dropped from his grasp.

On his part, Winter looked equally surprised, and they remained gazing at each other for some moments in speechless astonishment.

At last, by a great effort, and as if shaking off some potent spell which had chained his faculties, Candish moved away, and, going up to Herbert, said, in a low voice, "You told me your father was dead. Who, then, is this?"

"The old gentleman, you mean. He is Mr. Winter—my mother's brother."

"Are you quite sure of it?" demanded Candish.

"You ask me a question, and I give you an answer," rejoined the young man. "If you doubt me, address Mr. Winter himself."

Meantime, Winter having in some measure recovered from his astonishment, interrogated Tradescant about Candish, but learnt nothing to satisfy his curiosity.

"I should like to have a word with him," he said.

"By all means," replied Tradescant. "Mr. Candish," he called, "here is a gentleman, Mr. Winter, who desires to speak to you."

"I am at Mr. Winter's service," replied Candish, coming towards them. By this time he had quite regained his composure.

"Pray excuse my carelessness," he added, picking up the note and delivering it to Tradescant. "I don't know what came over me just now."

"We'll leave you together," said Tradescant, retiring with the rest.

"You call yourself Candish," said one old gentleman to the other, "but it won't do. I know who you are."

"And you call yourself Winter," rejoined the other old gentleman. "But I know *who* you are."

"What's the motive of this disguise?" demanded Winter.

"What's *your* motive?" rejoined the other.

"Mine is the gratification of my daughter's whim," said Winter.

"Mine is no whim—but I don't care to divulge my motive," said Candish.

"I thought you were dead," observed Winter.

"And I made sure you were," rejoined Candish.

"How has the world used you?" inquired Winter.

"Very badly, until of late," replied Candish. "To judge from appearances, it has used you well enough."

"Ay, ay, I married well—a Yorkshire heiress—mistress of Sutton Park—and changed my name."

"And dropped all your old friends and relations. Not surprising—'tis the way of the world. I changed my name, too—not because I was ashamed of my relations, but because they might reasonably enough have been ashamed of *me*."

"You do me an injustice, Lorry. Heaven knows, I was never ashamed of my relations.

But my wife—rest her soul!—was a very proud woman, and I never dared talk to her of my kinsfolk."

"Then you really are called Winter?"

"Don't I tell you I took my wife's name?—I'm Godfrey Winter, known in my own county as Squire Winter, of Sutton Park, and am just returned for the East Riding of Yorkshire."

"Indeed! You're much too great for me. Now mark me, Mr. Winter. Henceforth, we must be strangers to each other—that is, you are not to treat me as if there were any relationship between us, and be assured I shan't forget myself towards you. To Sir Gresham—God bless him!—I have never admitted my identity, and probably never shall. With you I shall be equally reserved. I have weighty reasons," he added, gravely and almost sternly, "for maintaining my incognito."

"Don't be afraid, Lorry. I shan't betray you. Mercy on us! what a strange meeting this is!

When I entered into my mad girl's scheme I didn't calculate on this as part of it."

"The scheme is now apparent to me," said Candish. "As chief actors in it, I must say your son and daughter have played their parts admirably. They have taken us all in. Believing them to be poor relations, Sir Gresham has treated them with the greatest kindness!"

"So I find," replied Winter. "His heart is made of the right stuff. Prue's object was to test Sir Gresham's goodness of heart, and nobly he has stood the trial."

"He is the kindest and best man in the world," rejoined Candish, warmly.

"And to think that I have kept aloof from him all this time!" cried Winter, in accents of self-reproach. "'Sdeath! I shall never forgive myself."

"Ay, ay, there's no excuse for *you*," rejoined Candish. "You ought to have made yourself

known to him long ago. However, yours is the greatest loss."

"I feel it—I feel it," said Winter, with a half groan. "I have been much to blame. First of all, I was wrong to yield to my wife, and then I became stupidly insensible myself. I might never have made myself known at all but for Prue. However, the past cannot be remedied. We must be wiser in future. Won't you shake hands with me, Lorry?"

"Not before this company. It would awaken suspicion. And pray don't call me Lorry. With you, as with every one else, I must be merely Hugh Candish."

"Well, as you please," replied Winter, with a sigh.

"My father asks me in this note to come to the Mansion House," said Tradescant, approaching Winter. "Would you like to be presented to him? If so, come with me."

"With the greatest delight," replied the old squire. "Herbert was to have presented me to his lordship, but I would rather have your introduction, for many reasons."

"The arrangement will suit me extremely well, sir, since I have a call to make with Sir Felix Bland," said Herbert to the squire. "I'll follow you to the Mansion House anon."

"I guess where you're going, sir," cried Winter. "But it will come to nothing. You'll never have my consent. Mind that."

With this he offered his arm to Milly, while Prue naturally fell to the care of Tradescant, and they all four went down stairs, followed by Candish and Crutchet.

Sedan-chairs were in waiting in the hall, and the ladies entering them, the whole party, with the exception of Crutchet, who returned to business, proceeded towards the Mansion House.

XII.

THE MEETING OF THE BROTHERS.

HALF a dozen gorgeously-arrayed footmen were standing at the grand portal as the chairs containing the young ladies were borne up the lofty steps, and deposited at the entrance of the saloon. A bulky hall porter advanced towards the party.

"Where's the Lord Mayor, Mr. Jollands?" said Tradescant to this personage. "In the justice-room?"

"No, sir," replied Jollands. "You'll find his lordship in the swordbearer's room. He went there about five minutes ago. Ah! there he is,"

he added, as Sir Gresham came forth from the room in question, accompanied by the sheriffs, three or four aldermen, and as many common-councilmen.

In a minute or two the assembly broke up, and the sheriffs and the others, bowing to the Lord Mayor, departed. Leaving Mr. Winter where he was for the moment, Tradescant then went up to his father, who was moving towards a room on the left of the vestibule, and told him he desired to present a gentleman to him.

The Lord Mayor at once assented, but desired his son to bring the gentleman to him, and proceeded to the chamber whither he was bound. Tradescant and Winter followed, still accompanied by Prue and Milly, both of whom were anxious to witness the meeting.

Just as they reached the door of the room into which the Lord Mayor had passed, Winter stopped, and said in a low voice to Prue, "I don't think I

can go in. My courage completely fails me. I shall never be able to sustain my part."

"Oh! you mustn't give way thus," she rejoined, in an encouraging tone; "I'll help you."

"Well, well, I must go through with it, I suppose," said the old gentleman.

"Go on, sir—go on," said Candish, pushing him into the room, and closing the door after him.

The apartment in which Mr. Winter found himself was large and lofty, but heavily furnished, and had a somewhat sombre air. The old squire did not dare to raise his eyes towards Sir Gresham, who was standing in the centre of the room, but kept back, shading his face with his cocked-hat.

"Who is this you have got with you?" inquired the Lord Mayor of Tradescant.

"Mr. Winter—a Yorkshire gentleman, sir," replied his son.

"Well, I shall be very happy to make his acquaintance. But why doesn't he come forward?'

"Pray excuse him," said Prue, in an under tone; "he is very much in awe of your lordship."

"In awe of me! nonsense!" rejoined Sir Gresham, laughing. "Bring him forward, Tradescant. Say I shall be delighted to receive him."

"Pray come on, Mr. Winter," said Tradescant. "His lordship will be very glad to know you."

"Now go on. Don't you hear what they say?" cried Candish, pushing him forward.

Thus forced to advance, Winter lowered his hat, and for the first time his features became fully revealed to the Lord Mayor.

Sir Gresham looked at him as if doubting the evidence of his senses, and at last directing an inquiring glance at Prue, who tried to avoid his gaze, said, "Did you not tell me your father was dead?"

What answer she might have returned it is impossible to say, for Winter did not give her time to make any, but roared out, "I can't keep up the

deception any longer. No, Sir Gresham, I'm not dead. I'm alive, and hearty as yourself."

"Gracious powers!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "Can this be my brother Godfrey?"

"Ay, ay, it's Godfrey himself, and heartily glad he is to see you again, brother."

"I am very glad to see you, Godfrey," replied the Lord Mayor, who was very much agitated, and spoke rather faintly. "I never expected we should meet again on earth. Excuse me. The surprise is somewhat too much. You ought to have prepared me," he said, in a half reproachful tone, to Tradescant.

"I could not do so, sir," replied his son; "for though I half suspected who it was, I was not quite sure."

"It was my fault, dearest uncle, and I now see the mistake," said Prue, in a voice of much concern. "I hope you are not ill?"

"A momentary faintness," he replied, sinking

into a chair. "It will soon pass." And he covered his face with his hands. The others gathered anxiously round him, and Winter looked reproachfully at Prue.

"If anything happens, I shall never forgive myself," he said, in a low tone to her.

"Let assistance be called," said Milly, alarmed.

"Leave him alone," said Candish. "He will be better soon. You have carried this matter too far."

"I see it—I see it," replied Prue. "How do you feel, dearest uncle? Speak—say you forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," replied Sir Gresham, raising his head, and showing that his eyes were filled with moisture. "It is joy that overpowers me. Believing, as I did, that the grave had closed upon your father—that we should meet no more on earth—what must my emotions be to see him standing before me?"

"I quite conceive them, dearest uncle, but don't excite yourself—don't dwell upon them."

"No; let us be thankful we are both spared for this meeting," cried Winter, "though I didn't mean it to be so serious as it has turned out; but I ought to have considered that where the heart is warm—as yours is—the feelings are not to be trifled with. Give me your hand, Gresham!—give me your hand! And so you knew me, eh?"

"Knew you! to be sure I did!" exclaimed Sir Gresham, shaking hands with him affectionately, and gazing at him through his misty eyes. "But do you know how long it is since we've met?—Forty-two years, sir—forty-two years! What have you been about not to let me hear from you during all that time? If I wasn't so glad to see you I should be very angry."

"My conduct is unpardonable, brother," rejoined Winter; "and yet I know you'll forgive it. Such excuse as I have to offer—and it is a

very poor one I will frankly admit—will best be made by telling you what has happened to me. I won't make a long story of it. When I left Lunnun in 1719, while you were still a 'prentice to old Tradescant, and working your way steadily on, I went down into Yorkshire, and started a small business at Scarborough, but I made little out of it—scarcely enough to support myself—and I don't know what might have become of me if I hadn't been lucky enough to marry an heiress, Arabella, daughter of Mr. Wymond Winter, of Sutton Park. Her brother, Ambrose, broke his neck when out hunting, and it was after that event that the lady married me. My wife was a very proud woman, though the marriage she had made would seem to be but little in accordance with such notions, and she not only required me to take her name—to which I had no objection—but insisted upon my completely sundering all connexion with my own family, to which I *ought* to have objected. Several children were the fruit of

the union, but I lost them all except the two youngest, Herbert and Prue. During my wife's lifetime you will see, brother, that there was some reason for my not keeping up any intercourse with you; but I have now been a widower for more than a year, and ought to have taken immediate steps to repair the wrong I had committed. But I know not what withheld me—false shame, perhaps. During their mother's lifetime, neither of my children had been aware of their relationship to you, and it was with infinite surprise they learned that the distinguished citizen, Sir Gresham Lorimer, was their uncle. When the news of your election as Lord Mayor came down to us, nothing would content them but that they should go up to town and pay you a visit. To this I at first objected—don't ask me why?—but at last Prue proposed that she and her brother should visit you in the guise of poor relations, and the notion chimed so well with my own humour that I agreed to it. The plot was then concocted by Prue, which has

since been carried out. Perhaps I ought never to have permitted such a scheme to be practised, and yet I cannot regret doing so, as I should otherwise not have been fully aware of your noble qualities."

"Say no more, brother—I am quite satisfied," cried the Lord Mayor, who had listened with deep interest to the recital. "I won't ask you whether you have ever thought of me during this long interval; but I have often thought of you. The fact is, we have been both to blame. If I had made proper inquiries I should have found you out, but I was engaged in business, and time passed on."

"Ay, I understand," replied Winter. "It's all right now. By the maskins! it's a strange thing for brothers to part almost when boys, and not to meet again till they are grown old fellows."

"Strange indeed!" said the Lord Mayor. "And so you are the contriver of this plot, eh, hussy?" he added, turning to Prue.

"Yes, uncle, I am," she replied. "And I hope

I shan't incur your displeasure by what I have done."

"But suppose I hadn't received you, what would you have done then? Gone back, eh?"

"I can't say, uncle," she replied. "But I had no doubts whatever about it, and you behaved just as I expected—most nobly. I may now tell you that Herbert was so offended by the treatment he experienced from my aunt and from my cousins, Lady Dawes and Mrs. Chatteris, that I had great difficulty in preventing him from throwing up his part."

"Don't omit me, Prue," remarked Tradescant. "I behaved as badly as any of them. My rudeness to Herbert was inexcusable."

"You have made ample amends since," replied Prue. "However, uncle, the complete success of my plot is attributable to darling little Milly here, whom I at once made my confidante. Without her aid I could not have gone on. She helped me to keep up the deception."

"I see it all, you little rogues," said Sir Gresham; "you have imposed upon me finely."

"Ah! brother, you don't know what Prue can do," cried Winter, with one of his boisterous laughs. "The cunning jade can twist me round her little finger—ha! ha!"

"I don't doubt it," replied the Lord Mayor, with a good-humoured smile. "If I had not been very stupid, niece, I must have suspected something from your sudden change of manner when you came to the Mansion House. It certainly perplexed me."

"So it did me, sir," observed Tradescant. "I could in no way account for it."

"Well, I suppose you can both understand it now," she rejoined.

"Yes, yes; I have got the key to the enigma now," said Tradescant. "And I also understand some things in Herbert's conduct which before appeared inexplicable."

"Oddsflesh! I can't help laughing when I think

of Herbert attending to business—ha! ha!" roared Winter. "That's the best part of the joke—ha! ha!"

"He did very well for a week or two," observed Prue; "but after that time I had great difficulty with him. You ought to have been here long ago, papa."

"So I ought," replied Winter. "And this reminds me, brother, that you have been at a very considerable expense for these young folk, which you must permit me to repay you."

"Nothing of the sort, Godfrey," replied the Lord Mayor. "It has been a great happiness to me to do what I have done."

"Ay, that would be all very well if they were really poor relations; but as that is not exactly the case, I must insist upon reimbursing you."

"Not another word on the subject, Godfrey, if you would not offend me," said the Lord Mayor. "Nay, nay," he continued, seeing that Winter was not altogether satisfied, "if your son and daughter

will play the part of poor relatives, they must take the consequences."

"Oddsbobs! that's true," cried Winter. "I never thought of that. Well, if I must be under an obligation, I would rather be so to you than to any one else."

"I shall never be able to discharge half the obligations I owe to my uncle," said Prue.

"Yes you will—he'll show you how to do it," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "I tell you what, Godfrey, you'll have to go back empty-handed. You must leave Prue behind. I shan't be able to part with her."

"If I do, I must take Milly in exchange, brother," rejoined Winter.

"We must hear what Milly says to that," observed Sir Gresham.

"Oh! I'm quite ready to go with my uncle," she answered.

"Egad! I suspect this plot has a good many

ramifications," observed the Lord Mayor. "Fresh lights burst upon me each moment."

"Since you have announced your intention of detaining Prue, sir," said Tradescant, "I hope you mean to provide her with a husband."

"Most certainly I do," replied the Lord Mayor. "She has already had several offers—some which appeared advantageous enough to me, though they might not appear equally so to you. I now understand why you refused young Cracraft, niece. You looked higher."

"No, uncle, that was not exactly the reason," she replied, demurely.

"I know why she refused him," rejoined Winter, with a great laugh. "Don't you perceive the real state of the case, brother? She likes some one else a vast deal better."

"Oh! if I dared to think that I was the favoured person!" exclaimed Tradescant. "You cannot be unaware, sir," he added to his father, "that my

affections have long since been fixed upon Prue. It is impossible to be so much with her, as I have been, and not to love her. Sometimes I have persuaded myself that my passion was returned—but again the indifference she displays towards me has raised fearful doubts in my mind. I trust she will trifle with me no longer. If my hopes must be crushed, better they should be so at once than I should be kept in such a state of suspense. Her father is now with us. In his presence, and in your presence, I ask her hand. My future happiness entirely depends upon the answer I may receive."

"There, girl, what do you say to that?" cried Winter. "That's to the purpose, I fancy. You know my wishes. I don't care to make them commands."

"No, no coercion. Prue must decide for herself," said the Lord Mayor. "Though I could wish for no better wife for my son, and though I truly believe he would now make her an excellent

husband, yet unless there is mutual love they had better not come together."

"You are good enough, uncle, to say you would not have me coerced," observed Prue. "Papa hints at laying his commands upon me, but I can assure you he lets me do just what I please. To be sure, I don't often disobey him, but in a matter of this kind, which concerns me more than any one else, I must really have my own way. Doubt of Tradescant's sincerity would be impossible after what he has just said. I may appear to trifle with him and to torment him needlessly, but I cannot help it. I have made up my mind that I won't consent unless——" And she paused.

"Unless what, niece?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"I must confide it to you in a whisper, uncle," she said, placing her lips to Sir Gresham's ear, and saying something in a low tone that made him laugh heartily.

"Well, let it be so," he said. "The arrangement pleases me. But where is Herbert?"

"He is gone with Sir Felix Bland to call on Alice Walworth," replied Prue. "He has renewed his intimacy with that coquette. He talks of her in much the same strain that Tradescant once did."

"Oh! that will never do!" said the Lord Mayor. "Alice Walworth won't suit your son, brother."

"He shan't have her!" cried Winter. "I've told him so already. Zounds! if I can't coerce Prue, I *will* coerce him."

"Mr. Walworth is a very decent old fellow, but Alice would never do for a country gentleman's wife," observed the Lord Mayor. "I now see why Sir Felix Bland wished the Walworths to be invited to the Easter ball."

"But have you invited them, papa?" inquired Milly, with some anxiety.

"Of course," replied Sir Gresham. "So soli-

cited, I couldn't do otherwise. But never mind. There is no great likelihood that the match will come off."

"None whatever," added Winter, emphatically.

At this moment Sir Felix Bland and Herbert entered the room.

"Why, you are back earlier than I expected," cried Winter. "You must have paid but a short visit."

"The ladies were out," replied Herbert, carelessly.

"They have gone to the Tower with young Cracraft," said Sir Felix, "and left word for us to follow them, but Herbert didn't seem inclined to do so."

"Are you talking of Alice Walworth and her mother?" inquired the Lord Mayor.

"Yes, my lord; your nephew is in high favour there," replied Sir Felix.

"One jilting doesn't seem enough for him," remarked the Lord Mayor. "He must take care

young Cracraft doesn't supersede him. That young fellow is very handsome, and a great favourite with the sex, though Prue doesn't appreciate his merits."

"Hang young Cracraft!" exclaimed Herbert. "I'll cut his throat."

"Nay, you ought to be obliged to him," said Prue. "If he opens your eyes to your folly in regard to Alice, he will do you infinite service. However, I am sorry for you. It is mortifying to be so coolly turned off."

"Don't teaze him any more, Prue," said Milly. "He looks vexed."

"Yes, I am vexed," replied the young man. "Well, sir," he added to his father, "I suppose full explanations have taken place between you and Sir Gresham?"

"Ay, ay, your uncle knows all," replied Winter.

"Concluding it would be so," rejoined Herbert, "I have let Sir Felix into the secret."

"And very much surprised I have been by the

information, my dear Mr. Winter," observed Sir Felix. "Permit me to say, sir, that had I been aware Herbert was the son of a wealthy country gentleman, I should not have encouraged him to pay court to Alice Walworth; but looking upon him as a young man who had to make his way in the world, I thought a girl with such a fortune a most desirable match."

"Under the supposed circumstances, you were quite right, Sir Felix," replied Winter; "but I should be glad if you could undo what you have done."

"Undo it!—well, I'll try," replied the little alderman.

"Harkye, Godfrey," said the Lord Mayor, taking Winter apart, "when we were last together there were three of us. You haven't inquired after the third."

"I didn't need to do so. I have seen him. Nay, I see him now," glancing over his shoulder at Candish. "I knew him at once. But why

does he deny his name? I hope there's nothing wrong."

"I do not think there is," replied the Lord Mayor. "But there is some mystery which I cannot unravel."

At this moment the door was opened by an usher, who announced Mr. Alderman Beckford.

XIII.

IN WHICH AN IMPORTANT VISITOR IS ANNOUNCED.

"GOOD day, my lord," cried Beckford, as he entered. "I have news for you. Ah! Mr. Winter!" he exclaimed, catching sight of that personage. "I didn't expect to see you here. When did you arrive in town?"

"Only last evening, sir, or I should have paid my respects to you," replied the other.

"What, are you acquainted with Mr. Winter?" said the Lord Mayor to Beckford.

"To be sure," replied the alderman. "He and I are old friends."

"You amaze me!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "Why, I never heard you allude to him."

"Very likely not. I was not aware you knew him. Well, sir," he added to Winter, "I have to offer you my congratulations on your triumphant election. You came in, in spite of ministerial opposition. I did you some service. I got Mr. Pitt and Lord Temple to write to some influential friends, and they helped you."

"They brought me in," replied Winter.

"Why, surely you're not the Mr. Winter who has just been elected for the East Riding of Yorkshire, eh?" cried Sir Gresham.

"Of course he is," replied Beckford; "why, who else did you take him for? Mr. Winter is a great gain to us—as staunch a supporter of the Great Commoner as your lordship, and as strongly opposed to the Favourite."

"Ay, that I am," said Winter.

"Who would have thought it?" exclaimed the

Lord Mayor. "Why, you never said a word to me about your election?"

"We have had so many family matters to discuss that I haven't had time," replied Winter.

"Family matters!" exclaimed Beckford, surprised in his turn. "Are you connected with Sir Gresham, Mr. Winter?"

"Pretty closely, sir," replied the old gentleman. "He is my brother—that's all."

"Poh! poh! you are jesting! Your brother. How can that be?"

"Easily enough," replied Winter. "I married the heiress of Sutton Park, and took her name. I am Sir Gresham's elder brother, Godfrey."

"Surprising indeed! But I remember a circumstance that occurred on Lord Mayor's Day—a circumstance that produced a very strong impression on me—when two young persons, describing themselves as children of a deceased brother, presented themselves to Sir Gresham, and were

most kindly received by him. Pray who are they?"

"My son and daughter, sir. There they are to speak for themselves. I'm the deceased brother—ha! ha! The whole thing was a hoax, sir—an experiment upon Sir Gresham's goodness of heart. You saw how he acted, you say?"

"I did, and shall never forget it. No man could have behaved better than Sir Gresham did on that occasion."

"But your news, my good sir—your news?" demanded the Lord Mayor. "You said you had something to communicate."

"So I have—something highly important," replied Beckford. "But the surprise of seeing Mr. Winter put it out of my head. I came to prepare you for a visit from a person of the greatest consequence——"

"There are so many persons of great consequence in town just now that I shall never be able

to guess whom you mean," said the Lord Mayor. "Is it the Great Commoner?"

"No; some one even greater than he. His Majesty is coming to the Mansion House this morning. The visit will be strictly private. A plain coach, and no escort, as is the way when the King has any little matter of his own to transact. My information is obtained from a reliable source. His Majesty is certainly coming, and Lord Melcomb will attend him. I thought it best to apprise you of the visit, though the King designs to take you by surprise."

At this moment the door was suddenly opened by the usher, whose excited looks showed he had something more than ordinary to communicate.

"My lord! my lord!" exclaimed the bewildered official, "his Majesty has just arrived at the Mansion House. I'm sure it's the King, because he has got his hat on, and everybody is bowing to him. His Majesty is crossing the vestibule,

attended by some gentlemen of your lordship's household. What shall I do, my lord?"

"Stay where you are, Fremantle," replied Sir Gresham, with a calmness that confounded the usher.

In another moment a gentleman of the household appeared at the door, and in a low but distinct voice announced "The King." As he retired, his Majesty stepped quickly and unceremoniously into the room.

XIV.

THE KING'S PRIVATE VISIT TO THE MANSION HOUSE.

THE King was plainly attired in a blue cloth coat, and was only distinguished by the star upon his breast. He wore top-boots, a tie-wig, and a cocked-hat, which of course he did not remove, and carried a cane in his hand. He stood erect, with a glowing cheek and a healthful look.

His Majesty was attended by Lord Melcomb, who seemed, if possible, to have increased in bulk, wore a richly-embroidered cherry-coloured silk coat, striped silk breeches, spotted silk hose, deep ruffles, a diamond solitaire, and an immense periwig, loaded with powder.

"Where's the Lord Mayor?" cried the King, in a quick voice. "Ah! I see!—I see!" he added, as Sir Gresham advanced towards him, and made a profound obeisance. "No one need leave the room," continued the King, as all those assembled within drew back, awaiting an intimation from his Majesty to withdraw, it being contrary to etiquette to retire without permission. "Quite an unceremonious visit, my lord," he went on. "I wouldn't even give you notice of it. I hope I don't interrupt you in any way."

"Interrupt me, sir!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor; "that would be impossible. I am ever ready to attend on your Majesty, but it so chances that you have arrived at a moment when I am quite unoccupied. Most of the persons present are relatives, and we were merely talking of family matters."

"Odd!—something connected with your family has brought me here," observed the King. "So, since you tell me most of the company are your

kinsfolk, there can be no objection to their remaining. But where's the Lady Mayoress? I don't see her among them."

"She is within, sir, and shall be instantly summoned, if you desire it."

"No! no! no need to do that," cried the King, somewhat hastily. "I hope she's well—I hope she's well—a fine woman!—a very fine woman—but wears too lofty a head-dress. I shall never forget how it stuck fast in her chariot window—ha! ha!—very droll!—very ridiculous—ha! ha!"

While he was laughing heartily, and the company were participating in the royal merriment, the door opened, and the Lady Mayoress, followed by her two elder daughters, entered the room as majestically as she could, for the door not being wide enough for her ample hoop, she had to raise her dress on one side to effect a passage. Her ladyship wore a sacque of dark lilac satin, trimmed with chenille silver, made very low behind, and falling off the shoulders. Her head-dress, though

not so monstrous as on the occasion that had provoked the King's merriment, was still lofty enough, the back hair being enclosed in a puff-bag, with slab curls above it, intermixed with white tiffany and beads. Both her daughters were richly and elegantly attired — Lady Dawes in a pearl-green sacque, trimmed with flowers and deeply flounced, and a Ranelagh tippet of fine blond; while Mrs. Chatteris wore a sky-blue riding-dress, braided with silver, and a fantail hat. As soon as she had cleared the door, the Lady Mayoress advanced towards his Majesty, and, when within the prescribed distance, curtseyed to the ground, while her daughters imitated her example.

"Glad to see you, madam," said the good-natured monarch, acknowledging their obeisances by touching his hat in military fashion, "and you, too, ladies. I was just inquiring about you."

"Your Majesty does me infinite honour," exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, enchanted.

"No more accidents, I hope, with your head-dress, madam?" said the King.

"None whatever, sir," she replied. "I followed your Majesty's judicious advice, and lowered it considerably. It makes me proud that you should deign to remember the circumstance."

"I am not likely to forget it," replied the King, laughing. "And now, my Lord Mayor," he added to Sir Gresham, "I'll tell you what has brought me to the Mansion House. I have already intimated that it is on a matter connected with your family. On the occasion of your grand banquet at Guildhall, I interrogated a man whom you supposed to be a long-lost brother, but who could not be induced to admit the relationship."

"I tremble at this commencement," muttered the Lady Mayoress, becoming agitated, and having recourse to her fan.

"The incident was a singular one," continued the King, "and my curiosity was excited about

that man. You promised to ascertain the truth concerning him, and to acquaint me with the result of your investigations, but you have never yet done so."

"If I have appeared remiss, it is because I have had no information to lay before your Majesty," replied Sir Gresham.

"Have you taken any trouble at all in the matter, my lord?" demanded the King.

"Not much, I confess, sir," replied Sir Gresham, "being perfectly satisfied that my suspicions were correct. I am sure the person is my brother."

"Oh no! your Majesty, it is not so," exclaimed the Lady Mayoress. "The wretch is a vile impostor."

"How can he be an impostor, madam, in the sense you mean," said the King, sharply, "since, as I understand, he still disclaims all relationship to Sir Gresham?"

"It is all his cunning, your Majesty. He works

upon Sir Gresham's good feelings. He is no more Sir Gresham's brother than he is Pope of Rome. Both Sir Gresham's brothers died many, many years ago."

"How do you know that, madam?" demanded the King, quickly.

"I haven't proof positive, your Majesty," she replied, "but Sir Gresham has often told me so himself. He was quite sure they must be dead, he said, or he should have heard from them."

"That was his impression at the time, no doubt," rejoined the King. "But he appears to have altered his opinion since."

"Entirely altered it, sir," replied the Lord Mayor. "I am now satisfied that both my brothers are living."

"Eh, eh, what, both?" cried the King.

"Both, your Majesty," rejoined Sir Gresham.

"Very odd!—very odd, indeed!" cried the King. "Both supposed dead!—both come to life again, eh? But about the one who was brought

before me—you are confident, you say, that he is your brother?"

"Quite confident, sir."

"Then what can be the man's motive for persisting in a denial of the relationship?"

"I am unable to conjecture, sir."

"Have you never pressed him for an explanation?"

"Not of late, sir. I have forborne to do so, because my inquiries seemed to pain him."

"Perhaps with reason. What has become of him? Where is he now?"

"Unless I am very much mistaken, sir, the man is in the room at this moment," observed Lord Melcomb.

"He is, my lord," replied Sir Gresham.

"Let him stand forward," cried the King, seating himself in a large arm-chair.

Thus enjoined, Candish stepped into the presence, and made a low obeisance. He looked

exceedingly pale, but his bearing, though profoundly respectful, was firm.

"Ay, ay, this is the man," cried the King, eyeing him sharply. "I recollect him, though he's greatly improved in appearance."

"Owing to Sir Gresham's kindness, your Majesty," said Candish. "Thanks to him, I have entirely recovered from my abject condition. He has made a new man of me."

"What has he done for you, eh?" demanded the King.

"Appointed me to an office of trust and responsibility in his household, your Majesty," replied Candish.

"And he has been satisfied with your conduct, eh?"

"Perfectly satisfied, sir," interposed the Lord Mayor. "He has had entire control of the expenditure, and has managed matters admirably."

"And you have never had any doubts of his honesty, my lord?" pursued the King.

"Of his honesty?" exclaimed Sir Gresham, surprised and hurt. "None whatever, sir. I would trust him with untold gold. I would stake my life upon his honesty."

"You might place yourself in jeopardy, sir," said the King. "I must now tell you that this man, whom you have so blindly trusted, and for whom you would be responsible with your life, is a convicted felon."

"A felon!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor, starting, while a shudder pervaded the assemblage.

All eyes were directed towards Candish, who appeared as if struck by a mortal blow, and caught at a chair for support.

"Look at him! — his agitation proclaims his guilt," said the King.

"I cannot—will not believe him guilty, sir," said the Lord Mayor, in a voice of anguish. "Speak, brother, and defend yourself."

Candish raised his head for a moment, and then let it fall again, as if stunned.

"With your Majesty's permission," remarked Lord Melcomb, "I will lay before the Lord Mayor the result of inquiries which by your commands have been made into this wretched man's history; and I may observe in the commencement—without seeking to impute blame to his lordship—that it would have been better if he had satisfied himself of the man's character before making him controller of his household."

Here Candish again raised his livid countenance, and looked almost vacantly at the speaker. Dews as of death had gathered thickly on his brow.

"Proceed, my lord," said the Lord Mayor.

"I am sorry to have to tell your lordship," pursued Lord Melcomb, with ill-disguised malice, "that there is no doubt whatever that this wretched man is your brother——"

"Oh no, no, no!" cried Candish. "I am not his brother."

"Peace!" said Sir Gresham, authoritatively. "You will convince no one by this denial."

"No one," said Melcomb. "It is, unhappily, too true. The fact has been elicited. Had there been any doubt, I would gladly have spared your lordship the pain of a public disclosure——"

"Spare me nothing, my lord," said Sir Gresham, "but go on."

"I will not task your lordship's patience too strongly," pursued Lord Melcomb, who seemed to enjoy Sir Gresham's trouble, "but in order to explain matters fully, it will be necessary to go back to the year 1720, when the person now before us left London and proceeded to Chester, where he entered the employment of an Irish linendraper named Newton, by whom he was much trusted, and by whom, if he had not wronged him, he would have been made a partner——"

"As Heaven shall judge me I never wronged him!" exclaimed Candish, earnestly. "I never wronged any man."

"Unluckily," continued Lord Melcomb, without noticing the interruption, "the clerk in whom Mr. Newton placed confidence was not proof against the temptation of the large sums of money passing through his hands. Several remittances by country dealers were abstracted, but Mr. Newton's suspicions never attached to his confidential clerk, whom he could not believe capable of dishonesty, but were rather directed towards another clerk, named James Archer. At last, however, the guilt was fixed upon the right party. In this way. A bank bill for a considerable sum—500*l.*, I think—was sent by letter to Mr. Newton. This bill was missing. All the clerks were examined, and the strictest investigations made; but at last—at the suggestion of Archer, who still unjustly laboured under his master's suspicions—the confidential clerk's desk was searched, and the bill was found secreted within it. Against such damnatory evidence as this no defence could be offered, yet the

culprit vehemently protested his innocence. However, he was tried, found guilty, and narrowly escaped hanging, but owing to the intercession of his worthy master, and his previous good character, sentence of death was commuted into imprisonment for life. That confidential clerk—the villain who robbed his master, and whose real name I will not pronounce—now stands before us."

"Yes, I am that unfortunate man," cried Candish, falling on his knees, and clasping his hands; "but, as I hope for mercy hereafter, I am innocent of the terrible charge. I was always faithful to Mr. Newton. I never wronged him of a farthing."

"Ay, so you said in the dock at Chester, but few believed the assertion," rejoined Lord Melcomb. "My story, however, is not done. The criminal clerk—I again spare his name—was imprisoned in Chester Castle, where he was kept in durance vile for more than two years, at the end of which time—though the gaol is tolerably strong

—he contrived to break out, and effect his escape. We have had some difficulty in tracing the fugitive's subsequent career, but have ascertained that he went first to Liverpool, and thence to Dublin, and eventually passed over to France. Probably the account he gave of himself on his previous examination by his Majesty was correct, and we may believe that he really did remain for a lengthened period on the Continent, since it is only within the last three years that a person answering to his description, and calling himself Candish, appeared at Bristol. There he seems to have led an idle, vagabond life, and to have associated with strolling players, showmen, and other disreputable characters. At one time he was drawer at a tavern, at another croupier at a gaming-house, and after that a quack doctor and a merry-andrew at country fairs."

"I could do no better—I could get no other employment," cried Candish. "I was a broken-down, dispirited man."

"What have you to say to this accusation?" demanded the King, in a severe tone.

"Simply to repeat my innocence of the charge brought against me, sir," said Candish. "I know I shall not obtain credence—but I speak the truth. Were I put to the rack I should still declare my innocence—and, indeed, no torments could be greater than those I now endure. I have been falsely accused—punished for a crime I never committed—have endured obloquy and unmerited suffering—have been branded as a felon, compelled to fly from my own country, and return to it covertly—but I have never suffered half so much as I now suffer in bringing shame and dishonour upon my noble-hearted brother, and in giving his enemies an opportunity of triumphing over him."

"If my advice had been taken, this dreadful exposure would never have occurred," said the Lady Mayoress.

"A dreadful exposure indeed," said Lady Dawes. "I shall never survive it."

"That a high and honourable name, such as my brother bears, should be sullied by any supposed act of mine, would be intolerable, but I cannot believe that such will be the case," pursued Candish. "His conduct towards me is such as can only redound to his credit in the opinion of all worthy men. I was brought before him, as your Majesty knows, in the most abject state of distress, yet he did not—even in his day of pride—even in your august presence, sir, he did not hesitate to own me."

"Quite true!" cried the King, somewhat moved. "Quite true! The Lord Mayor behaved nobly. I have always said so."

"But for my good brother's kindness—but for his timely assistance," pursued Candish, "that day would have been my last on earth. Driven to despair, I should have buried my sufferings in the river that flows through your city, sir. But he took me by the hand. He gave me back some of the self-respect I had lost I thought the worst

was over—that the few years remaining of my troubled life would be passed in peace. But it was not so ordained. Misery, as usual, was dogging at my heels. When the sky appeared cloudless comes this terrible clap of thunder, and I am stricken down again—never more to rise."

The old man's passionate eloquence powerfully affected all his auditors. Many of them, as may well be conceived, were painfully moved, and but for the presence of the King some stronger manifestation of their sympathies would have been made. Lord Melcomb took out his magnificent diamond snuff-box, and applied himself to it. The King remained thoughtful for a moment, and then remarked to Lord Melcomb, "I can't believe this man is guilty."

"I'm sorry to say there can be no doubt about it, sir," replied the stout nobleman, shaking his head.

At this juncture Mr. Beckford stepped forward, and making a profound obeisance to the King,

said, "I have allowed the matter to proceed thus far, sir, because I wished to hear what my Lord Melcomb had to bring forward, and because I thought it would be most to the interest of the unfortunate man that he should be allowed to speak for himself before anything was said for him. No one who has listened to him—I will not even except your Majesty—could, I think, doubt his innocence. But I am happy to say I am in a condition to prove it."

"Eh! eh! what!—to prove his innocence!" cried the King, quickly. "I'm glad of it. But how, sir,—how?"

"By this letter, sir, which I received this very morning from Chester. It is from old Mr. Newton. He encloses a duly certified confession of James Archer, his former clerk, who has recently expiated a long catalogue of crimes on the gallows. Archer confesses that he abstracted the bank-bill, and, in order to avoid certain detection, hid it in Lawrence Lorimer's desk. For this vile act, and for its de-

plorable consequences to his victim, the wretch seems to have felt due compunction. Old Mr. Newton, also, as your Majesty will see, if you will deign to cast your eye over his letter, expresses the greatest grief for poor Lawrence Lorimer's unmerited sufferings. Such was the opinion he entertained of him, he says, that he never could believe him guilty, and would not have prosecuted if he had not been compelled to do so."

"You have come forward most opportunely, and I am glad of it, Mr. Beckford," said the King. "But how happens it that Mr. Newton addressed that letter to you?"

"Shrewdly observed, your Majesty," said Lord Melcomb. "How did that chance?"

"I will tell you, sir," replied Beckford. "Having received information that Lord Melcomb was making inquiries about Lawrence Lorimer, and fancying they might be with no very friendly intent, I set to work myself, with what result you see. It is right

to say that I acted entirely without the Lord Mayor's knowledge or concurrence."

With this he handed the letter to the King, who proceeded to read it carefully through, and then examined the confession enclosed in it.

"Hum!" muttered Lord Melcomb, while his Majesty was thus employed. "My agent has betrayed me. Beckford must have learnt that the king was coming here, and have brought that letter with him, waiting an opportunity to produce it with most effect."

Meanwhile, Winter had approached his unfortunate brother, and assisted him to rise. The sudden revulsion of feeling had been almost too much for the old man, and for a few moments he remained sobbing on his brother's shoulder.

"Poor fellow! give him a chair," said the King, compassionately.

"I do not need one, sir," replied Lawrence Lori-

mer, mastering his emotion, and bowing gratefully to his Majesty.

"Then learn from my lips, sir," rejoined the monarch, "that you are completely exculpated. At the same time, I must express the deep concern I feel that you should have experienced so much unmerited suffering."

"Oh, sir, let me thank you on my knees for those gracious words," cried Lawrence Lorimer, prostrating himself before the King. "They requite me for all the misery I have endured."

"Rise, sir, rise!" cried the King, kindly aiding him as he spoke. "Henceforth you may bear your own name without blushing for it. 'Tis an honoured name," he added, looking round, "and I hope all who bear it will keep it spotless."

"It shall be my aim to do so, your Majesty," cried Tradescant.

"Eh! eh! who spoke?" demanded the King.

"My son, sir," replied the Lord Mayor. "Since I last had the honour to present him to your Ma-

jesty, he has raised himself greatly in my estimation."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the King. "Let him go on in the same course. But who is that old gentleman," he added, indicating Winter, who was standing beside his brother Lawrence—"from the country, eh?"

"That, sir, is Mr. Winter, of Sutton Park, Yorkshire, the newly-elected member for the East Riding," replied Beckford.

"Present him—present him," cried the King. "Glad to see you, Mr. Winter. How d'ye do? Just come to town, eh?"

"Arrived last night, please your Majesty," replied Winter.

"Found your way to the Mansion House already, eh? Well, sir, you've been present at a very interesting scene."

"I wouldn't have missed it for half my estate," said Winter. "It has terminated in a most satisfactory manner to us all."

"True—very true! But why particularly satisfactory to you, Mr. Winter? Are you a relation of the Lord Mayor?"

"A very near relation, please your Majesty."

"Harkye, my Lord Mayor!" cried the King. "You said that both your brothers, whom you supposed dead, had come to life again. One we have just found. What has become of the other?"

"Should he chance to be in a humble position of life, the Lord Mayor is too high-minded to disown him," observed Lord Melcomb, with a sneer.

"That I am sure he would not," said Winter. "He has given proof enough of his superiority to mere worldly consideration. My position, my lord," he added proudly, "is but little inferior to your own."

"Your position, Mr. Winter. I never questioned it. We were speaking of the Lord Mayor's brother, sir."

"Well, my lord," replied Winter, "I am the Lord Mayor's brother."

"The deuce you are!" exclaimed Lord Melcomb, disconcerted.

"But how comes your name to be Winter?" asked the King.

"I married a Yorkshire heiress, please your Majesty, and took her name. Before that event I was Godfrey Lorimer. Until I entered this room, Sir Gresham was not aware that I was still in the land of the living."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the King. "Why practise such a trick upon him, eh?"

"It was my daughter's doing, sir," replied Winter.

"Your daughter! Where is she?"

"Here, sir," replied Winter, leading Prue forward, who made a profound inclination to his Majesty.

"What's this I hear, young lady?" demanded

the King. "You have been contriving a plot, eh?"

"A very harmless one, I trust, sir," she replied, "and I think your Majesty will scarcely blame me for what I have done, when you learn to what a display of goodness on my uncle's part it has led. On the day of Sir Gresham's installation, while he was surrounded by important personages, my brother and myself presented ourselves to him in the guise of poor relations, and though he might well have acted otherwise, he welcomed us in the kindest manner; and being led to suppose that we had no parents living, and no friends in town, insisted on our taking up our abode with him. More than this, he at once offered to place my brother in his business. From that day to this he has shown us unvarying kindness, treating us in every respect like his own children."

"Please your Majesty," said the Lady Mayoress, stepping forward, "I think my niece has used me very ill in not letting me into the secret, though

she could take my youngest and least experienced daughter into her confidence. Had I known the real truth, that her father was a wealthy Yorkshire squire, I should have felt very differently towards her and her brother, and have comported myself accordingly. But to come before me as a poor relation, and degrade me in the presence of great folks, was more than human nature could bear."

"Yet Sir Gresham bore it, madam," said the King, laughing.

"Ah! but, your Majesty, if my niece wished to try him, there was no necessity to try me. I don't pretend to be as soft-hearted as Sir Gresham, and I can't abide to be deceived. If people are rich and pretend to be poor, they mustn't blame me for taking them at their word. My niece, I say, shouldn't have kept me in the dark. At first she lowered me, and now she makes me look ridiculous."

"I can't relieve you from the dilemma in which

you have unwittingly placed yourself, madam," replied the King. "If you had imitated your worthy husband, you would have been right on both occasions. In future, I recommend you to model your conduct on his conduct. You will find your account in doing so. And now, my Lord Mayor," he added to Sir Gresham, "a word in parting to you. I certainly did not visit you with any design of assisting at the dénouement of the little comedy played off by your pretty niece, but with a very different object, which has happily been set at rest. But I am glad to have been present, since it has given me an opportunity of testing your deserts. As a loyal subject—and I know you are one—you will not be indifferent to your sovereign's commendation. You have it. You have behaved very well throughout—better, I firmly believe, than most men would have done under circumstances so peculiar. Your brothers will know how to appreciate your conduct, and I don't think, after what has occurred, that you are

likely to lose sight of them again. Thus much for the estimation in which I hold your private character. In your public capacity, as chief magistrate of this great City, I hear nothing but praise of you. I am told—and I can easily believe it from what I have myself seen—that since the days of the immortal Whittington, the municipal chair has never been more worthily filled; that all your duties have been most efficiently discharged, and that this house has never known such hospitality as is now practised within it."

"Such gracious words as your Majesty has been pleased to let fall," replied the Lord Mayor, in a voice of deep emotion, "are a reward for a life of exertion. I trust I shall never forfeit your good opinion."

"No fear of that," said the King. "Go on as you have hitherto done, and I will not fail publicly to mark my approbation."

"Your Majesty is too good," said the Lord Mayor.

"Your son, you say, is well-conducted, and gives you perfect satisfaction?" said the King.

"He is all that I could wish, sir," replied the Lord Mayor, emphatically.

"That's right!" exclaimed the good-natured monarch. "Let him follow his sovereign's example, and marry. 'Tis the best thing he can do, and I dare say he'll have no objection."

"None whatever, your Majesty," cried Tradescant.

"Why not wed him to your niece?" pursued the King, smiling at the young man's eagerness. "She would make him a capital wife, I'm sure."

"Such an arrangement would be in entire accordance with my wishes, sir," responded the Lord Mayor.

"And with mine," added Winter.

"His Majesty doesn't deign to consult me," thought the Lady Mayoress. "I am nobody in his estimation."

"And what says the young lady?" pursued the

King. "Before you answer, let me add that you will get a title, for the Lord Mayor will have a baronetcy."

"I do not need that inducement, sir," replied Prue. "My cousin Tradescant has long been master of my heart, and if I have hitherto declined to give him a decided answer, it has been because I have a pet project which I wish to carry out at the same time."

"Another project!" exclaimed the King, smiling. "Why, you are as full of them as a soubrette in a play. Well, you have been lucky hitherto I dare say your scheme will succeed."

"After your Majesty's assurance I am sure it will. So when my cousin Tradescant asks again he shall have an answer."

"All happiness attend you both!" said the King, "and may the marriage be productive of comfort to you, my Lord Mayor—and to you, too, Mr. Winter. And if there should be a double marriage in the family, as I suspect there will be,

and another Lorimer take the name of Winter, may that union be equally propitious. And so good day, my Lord Mayor — good day to you all!"

Graciously saluting the company, who all inclined reverentially, he then passed forth with Lord Melcomb, and attended by the Lord Mayor, Sir Felix Bland, and Mr. Beckford, crossed the vestibule, where by this time all the officers of the household, with the splendid retinue of servants, were arrayed, and entering the plain carriage that had brought him, drove back to St. James's Palace.

End of the Fourth Book.

BOOK V.

EASTER MONDAY.

I.

THE EPPING HUNT.

EASTER Monday had now arrived, a notable day in the almanack of the Corporation of London.

On this morning, attended by his chaplain, swordbearer, and macebearer, robed in scarlet, and wearing his insignia of office, the Lord Mayor proceeded to Christ Church, of which he was governor *ex officio*, to hear a sermon.

Here he was met by the president and the other governors of the ancient hospital, founded by Edward VI., while a procession, consisting of the Blue-coat Boys, beadles, masters, and other officers

of the school, entered the church at the same time. In itself Christ Church is by no means remarkable for beauty, but it occupies the site of a very majestic edifice, unfortunately destroyed by the remorseless conflagration of 1666. The ancient fabric was one of the most superb conventual churches in the city of London, and had been, till despoiled by Henry VIII., very richly endowed. Possessing shrines, reputed of peculiar sanctity, the church was coveted as a place of burial by the great. Many illustrious personages were interred within its walls—four queens, amongst whom was Isabella, the "she-wolf of France," four duchesses, four countesses, earls, barons, and knights without number. Its splendid monuments of marble and alabaster were pulled down, at the dissolution of the monastery in 1545, by Sir Martin Bowes, then Lord Mayor, and the materials sold for the insignificant sum of 50*l*.

We cannot say that any regrets for this ancient conventual church filled the breast of Sir Gresham,

or that he felt indignant at the wanton desecration practised by his predecessor, Sir Martin Bowes; perhaps, indeed, he might have preferred the modern pile to the ancient, but unquestionably he looked very tranquil, and listened patiently to the discourse pronounced by the Rev. Dr. Dugdale, now and then glancing at the Blue-coat Boys thronging the galleries, and admiring their quick and intelligent countenances.

The sermon over, a statement was read by Dr. Dugdale of the income and expenditure of the hospitals under the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction. At the conclusion of the service, Sir Gresham and the other civic dignitaries repaired with the president and governors to Christ's Hospital, where a splendid collation awaited them. Both on entering the school and on leaving it the Lord Mayor was lustily cheered by the Blue-coat Boys.

And here we may mention that on the following day (Easter Tuesday), according to custom, these Blue-coat Boys, before going to church,

marched through the Mansion House, each receiving from the Lord Mayor, who was stationed with a large party in the saloon to see them pass, a glittering silver coin fresh from the Mint, two plum cakes, and a glass of wine. Needless to say, they all drank his lordship's health.

On the same day, according to well-known custom, there was a stag-hunt in Epping Forest, though the Lord Mayor was too much occupied to attend it.

Liberty to hunt in the royal forests in the vicinity of London was granted to the civic authorities by Henry III., and hence the appointment of the officer styled the Common Hunt, whose business it was to take care of a pack of hounds belonging to the Lord Mayor and citizens, and to attend them in those forests wherein they were authorised by royal charter to hunt.

On the Easter Monday in question there was a numerous meeting in an open and picturesque

part of the forest adjacent to the pleasant little town of Epping. Fortunately the day was fine, promising to be propitious to the sport. Various and grotesque were the costumes of these cockney sportsmen, some being in scarlet coats bedizened with lace, some in green, and others in coats that seemed to belong to the days of Queen Anne. The Common Hunt was arrayed in a scarlet coat laced with gold, with a large hunting-horn slung from his shoulder, and wore a black velvet cap and top-boots. With him, besides his man, who was equipped like himself, were four foresters habited in green, two huntsmen, and a couple of whippers-in. The latter had charge of a capital pack of stag-hounds. With the Common Hunt were a great number of fat citizens. Amongst these were Mr. Winter and Herbert, both of whom, owing to the providence of the Lord Mayor, were remarkably well mounted. Herbert wore a scarlet riding-dress, which set off his fine

figure to great advantage, and being a first-rate horseman, was one of the most noticeable personages on the field.

Though so near London, at that time wild stags were to be met with in Epping Forest, and the covert having been drawn, a fine roebuck was speedily roused, whereupon the Common Hunt winded his horn blithely, and the hounds were immediately cast off, and the whole field started in the chase.

"Hark forward! gentlemen!—hark forward!" shouted the Common Hunt.

"Ay, hark forward!—hark forward! tantivy!" roared the squire.

The scene that ensued was so supremely ridiculous, and so provocative of merriment, that old Winter absolutely roared with laughter. Such shouting was there!—such cracking of whips!—such rushing here and there!—such jostling—such swearing—such confusion—as never was seen the like!

Half the fat citizens recently gathered round the Common Hunt were unseated—others, having lost their hats and wigs, were clinging to their horses' manes like John Gilpin, and roaring lustily for help. Some were carried back, against their will, towards Epping. Others were borne off into the thickest part of the forest, and did not reappear till the chase was over. Hundreds of riderless horses were seen flying about, and some of these, excited by the shouts and clatter, followed the hounds.

As the chase went on, fresh disasters occurred, and more citizens were left on the ground, and unable to regain their steeds. In less than a quarter of an hour the field was diminished to a third of its original number, but even then there was a great throng, and so much pressing and struggling that even a good horseman was in danger from the clumsiness and bad riding of his companions.

At first, as we have said, the old squire laughed

immoderately at the mishaps of the citizens, but when they dashed against him or got in the way, he soon began to lose his temper, and swore in a style worthy of an old fox-hunter. Finding, however, it was impossible to keep them off either by voice or whip, he extricated himself as speedily as he could from the press, and shouted to Herbert to join him.

They had not ridden far together, when a stoutly-built man, in a chocolate-coloured riding-dress, and mounted on a thorough-bred bright bay, joined them. No sooner did the old squire cast eyes on this personage than he recognised him.

"By the Lord Harry! 'tis he!" he cried. "'Tis the Flying Highwayman, who took ten guineas from me t'other day near Barnet. Zounds! sirrah," he added to the man, "have you the impudence to show yourself on an occasion like this?"

"Why not?" replied the other. "I have as much right to be here as you. I attend all meet-

ings and races. But you are mistaken in saying I robbed you. I've not been at Barnet for months."

"I might be mistaken about you," rejoined the squire, "but I'll swear to your horse. I knew him again in a moment."

"But my prancer doesn't prove me to be a highwayman, old cock. This is a well-known horse, Reg'lus. I bought him from the Lord Mayor's son, Mr. Tradescant Lorimer, when that young gem'man left the turf."

"The deuce you did!" exclaimed the squire, in surprise. "Well, he's a fine horse, I must say."

"Is this Regulus?" cried Herbert, glancing admiringly at the animal.

"Yes, sir," replied the rider, proudly. "This is Reg'lus, and a reg'lar good 'un he is."

"Will you sell him?" demanded Winter.

"Not if you'd give me his weight in gold," replied the man.

"Then I'll have him and you too," rejoined the squire, snatching at the bridle.

"No you won't, old blade," replied the highwayman, eluding him, and spurring Regulus, who bounded forward. "There isn't a horse in this field that can catch me."

"I'll try what I can do," rejoined Herbert, starting after him.

The squire also set off in pursuit, bellowing out at the top of his voice, "A highwayman—a highwayman!" But though at other times such a cry might have produced the desired effect, it was now, in the tumult and excitement, almost unheeded. Many thought it a hoax—and almost all preferred hunting the deer to chasing a highwayman. Only half a dozen followed the old squire and his son, and these speedily dropped off, and returned to the hounds. It was evident, indeed, that there was but little chance of capturing the highwayman, who had not overrated the powers of his steed. He led his pursuers into the forest, carrying them over sweeping glades towards Harlow, and finally plunging into a thicket, was lost.

"That Regulus is a devilish fine horse," cried the squire, as they rode back. "I wish Tradescant had sold him to me instead of to that saucy knave."

"Ay, he's a beauty," replied Herbert. "Tradescant offered him to Tom Potter, member for Aylesbury, but, as Tom wouldn't buy, he sold him for an old song to the first bidder. That rascal only gave a hundred for him."

"And he's worth a thousand," rejoined the squire, with something like a groan. "But where are the hounds?" he added, pausing to listen. "Ha! I hear them. They are coming this way."

As he spoke, the lordly hart, distinguishable by his noble antlers, burst into the glade along which they were riding, about a mile off, and speeded along it. Presently, the hounds, who were close upon him, and giving tongue loudly, came in view; and then the Common Hunt and his man, both of whom were excellently mounted, and rode well; and after them as many of the field as had

been able to keep up with the hounds. Finding that the hart was coming straight up the glade, the old squire and his son drew to one side, beneath the covert of the trees, in order not to turn the flying animal out of his course, and from this post of observation they enjoyed the animating spectacle exceedingly. When within a quarter of a mile of them, however, the stag turned off to the right, and hounds and huntsmen of course went after him. On this the two Winters instantly quitted the covert, and crossing the glade, took a course which they thought would bring them upon the field. And so it chanced. They had not proceeded far, when they again caught sight of the hart, and, clapping spurs to their horses, soon came up with the huntsmen. They were just in time, for, now being sore pressed, the hart, having found a favourable position among the trees, stood at bay, and gored three or four hounds who rushed upon him. The cries of the wounded dogs checked the others, and they stood baying in front of him as he

menaced them with his horns, but, warned by the fate of their companions, none of them ventured to attack him.

"Kill him!" shouted the squire. "Kill him, or he'll maim half the pack."

"He's dangerous," said the huntsman, not liking the looks of the infuriated animal.

"Give me your knife," cried Herbert, "and I'll despatch him."

The huntsman hesitated, but, a couple more hounds being hurt, he gave his long woodman's knife to Herbert, who, dismounting, warily approached the hart through the trees, and while the animal was staring at the hounds, suddenly dealt him the mortal blow.

The mort was then sounded, and Herbert received the compliments of the Common Hunt and the others on his prowess. The buck was not flayed and broken up on the spot as used to be the case in good old times, but was placed on boughs, and borne in triumph on the shoulders of the

foresters to Epping, where a covered cart was waiting to convey the carcase to town.

After refreshing themselves at the comfortable hostel known as Epping Place with a glass of amber-bright ale, the squire and his son rode off to town, having to dine with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House.

II.

AN OLD YORKSHIRE SERVANT.

SIR GRESHAM had insisted upon his eldest brother taking up his abode at the house in Cheapside, saying there were plenty of unoccupied rooms at his disposal, and Winter delightedly availed himself of the offer. To Cheapside, therefore, father and son repaired on their return to town, and consigning their horses to the care of the groom who had attended them, they entered the house and went up-stairs together. The squire had brought with him an old servant from Yorkshire, whose livery, uncouth manners, and appearance, were

sources of great amusement to Tiplady. The shrewd old Yorkshireman, however, was quite a match for the coxcombical town valet.

On reaching the landing, the squire and his son found Tiplady and Sam Liptrap, the old Yorkshire serving-man in question, seated together in a small back-room, amusing themselves with a game at cards. Certainly a greater contrast could not be found than these two servants presented; the one hard, dry, ungainly, and attired in an old-fashioned livery, the other easy, airy, foppish, and quite as smart as his master. Old Liptrap looked somewhat confused at being thus discovered, but Tiplady was not in the slightest degree disconcerted.

"What are you about, Sam?" cried the squire; "losing your money at cards?"

"Na, na, yer honour," replied Sam Liptrap, "I be winner of these two half-crowns."

"Yes, sir," cried Tiplady, "the luck has been

entirely with Mr. Liptrap. But he has promised to give me my revenge."

"If he does I'll discharge him," cried Winter. "Harkye, sirrah, I'll have no gambling among servants. When you go to Sutton, Herbert, you must leave this puppy behind you."

"If you refer to me, sir," said Tiplady, "that direction to Mr. Herbert is entirely superfluous. Under no circumstances would I consent to bury myself in the country. And I should expire outright if such a livery as Mr. Liptrap's were offered me. I should, upon my honour, sir."

"The clothes be good enough, I'm quite sure," said Sam Liptrap. "I find no fawt wi' un."

"I should hope not, or you'll get no more from me," cried Winter; "but don't stand chattering there, but come with me to my room and help me to dress for the Lord Mayor's dinner."

"Lord, your honour, I should so like to see the grand dinner at the Mansion House, and the

fine folk, and the plate. Mr. Tip has been tellin' me abowt it."

"I'll take him, sir, if you will permit me," said Tiplady.

"Well, well, you may go, Sam. But you don't get drunk and make a fool of yourself. And now come along, or I shall be late."

So saying, he marched off to his room, followed by the old servant, while Herbert proceeded in another direction, attended by Tiplady.

Though often pressed by the Lord Mayor to dine at the Mansion House, Crutchet, with characteristic modesty, had hitherto refrained from doing so, but the Easter banquet held out such irresistible temptations, especially when Tradescant told him that all the family were to be assembled on the occasion, and that, being looked upon as one of them, he could not, with propriety, be left out, that he yielded, and prepared himself for the important event. Arrayed in a handsome suit of black, expressly ordered for the

occasion, he went up-stairs about half-past five—the dinner-hour at the Mansion House being six o'clock—and proceeded to the drawing-room, where he was shortly afterwards joined by Tradescant and the two Winters.

The old squire wore a cinnamon-coloured velvet coat garnished with lace, a rich brocade waistcoat, a laced steinkirk folded broadly over his chest, and a peruke arranged by the skilful hands of M. Le Gros. Tradescant was also elegantly and even richly dressed in dark velvet, but was quite eclipsed in show and splendour by Herbert, who was now, beyond all question, the beau of the family. On seeing Crutchet, for whom he had a great liking, Mr. Winter went up to him, and shaking him cordially by the hand, said, "I'm delighted you are going with us to the Mansion House, Bow Bells. If you had been absent to-day, the dinner would have been incomplete."

"That's what I told Mr. Crutchet, uncle," said Tradescant. "I said we should all—from the

Lord Mayor downwards—be greatly disappointed if he stayed away. But I had hard work to persuade him. Would you believe it, he has never yet dined either at Guildhall or the Mansion House."

"I can believe anything odd of him," said Winter. "But what's your reason for such strange conduct, Bow Bells? It can't be because you've not been invited?"

"No, that's not it, sir," replied Crutchet. "The Lord Mayor has repeatedly asked me. But I'm not fit company for such great folks as dine with his lordship."

"Pshaw! you underrate yourself, Bow Bells. You're fit company for anybody. However, I'm glad you've made up your mind to dine with us to-day. You'll have a famous dinner, I can tell you—plenty of venison and turtle—ha! ha!"

"Why, sir, you talk of the venison and turtle with as much gusto as an alderman," observed his son.

"Oddsflesh!" exclaimed the old gentleman, chuckling, "there isn't an alderman among them, or a Mazarine either, who will bring a better appetite to the feast than I shall. I'm as hungry as a hunter, and shall do ample justice to all the good things the Lord Mayor may set before me. Follow my example, Bow Bells, and you'll do well."

"Your ride to Epping has been of service to you, uncle," observed Tradescant, laughing. "Pray how did the stag-hunt go off?"

"Wonderfully," replied the old gentleman. "Never was at such a meet in my life—ha! ha! Such cattle! such riders—why, sir, five minutes after the start the ground looked like a field of battle, strewn with prostrate cits—Culloden was nothing to it—ha! ha! ha!"

"And who should we come upon but the Flying Highwayman!" observed Herbert. "We gave him chase, but he got away from us. However, you won't be surprised at that, when I tell you he rode Regulus."

"Regulus!—is it possible? No wonder, then, he performs such wonderful feats."

"I shall get Regulus when the rascal is hanged," laughed the squire.

At this moment, Tiplady announced that the carriage was ready. Whereupon all the party went down stairs and got into the conveyance, which was drawn up at the private door in Queen-street, and Tiplady and old Liptrap having climbed up behind, the coachman drove towards the Mansion House.

By this time Cheapside was filled with a long line of splendid equipages, proceeding in the same direction. By the aid of a peace-officer, the carriage containing our friends was at once admitted into the line, otherwise they might have been long in reaching their destination. As it was, they proceeded so slowly that it was full a quarter of an hour before they arrived at the Mansion House.

III.

THE EASTER BANQUET.

THE approaches to the grand portal were covered with awnings. Both flights of steps were so crowded with richly-dressed persons of both sexes, that access to the great doorway was a work of some difficulty. However, our friends reached it at last.

Here were stationed on either side the Lord Mayor's beadles in their state liveries, holding their silver-headed staves, other stavesmen, some officers of the City militia, and two officers of the household, bearing white wands. Within the portal, and

at the entrance to the vestibule, stood the senior City Marshal in his full habiliments, the junior City Marshal, various officers of the household in full dress, the Lord Mayor's barge-master in his state dress, the watermen carrying their colours, seven trumpeters in embroidered frocks, holding clarions fringed with gold, the Lord Mayor's three carvers, the Lord Mayor's coachman, Mr. Keck, in his state-livery, the postilions in their tight buckskins and black velvet caps, adorned with Sir Gresham's crest, and a whole array of tall footmen in state-liveries.

Besides these, and many others whom we have not time to particularise, there was a grand military band, with a guard of honour, consisting of a company of Grenadiers, in their tall caps and full regimentals, drawn up in two lines along the vestibule.

What with the numerous guests constantly pouring in and passing on, the various functionaries belonging to the Lord Mayor's household, and the

guard of honour, with the officers belonging to it, the saloon, spacious as it is, looked thronged, and presented a very imposing spectacle. To those who had never seen it on a similar occasion, as was the case both with Mr. Winter and old Crutchet, it was peculiarly striking. Here might be seen a portly alderman in his scarlet gown and chain ceremoniously welcoming the prime warden of the Merchant Tailors' Company, and his wife and daughters; here was another alderman, likewise in his robes, and wearing his badges of office —in this case it was our acquaintance, Sir Felix Bland—paying his devoirs, in his usual adulatory style, to some charming court ladies; here was a group of deputies and common-councilmen in their mazarine blue robes, talking and chatting together, and passing remarks on the company as they passed in review before them; but these were only parts in the brilliant scene, which it would require time to examine fully.

Above the general buzz proceeding from the

crowd, and resounding from the dome, arose the loud voices of the ushers as they announced the guests. The old squire gazed around him with wonder, not unmingled with admiration. Prepared as he was for a showy scene, this display of civic pomp and splendour far exceeded his expectations, and he began to have a higher notion of the dignity and importance of his brother's office than he had previously entertained. The sight of so many personages rather bewildered him, and he moved on with the stream in silence, gazing with a sort of awe, that rather surprised himself, at the numerous civic dignitaries and grandly-arrayed officers of various degrees by whom he was surrounded. Poor Crutchet was so dazzled by the splendour of the scene that he scarcely dared to look around.

Descrying the party as they moved along, and chancing to be disengaged at the moment, Sir Felix Bland immediately made up to them, and seizing Mr. Winter by the hand, said, "My dear

sir, I'm so very happy to see you—and you too, my dear Mr. Crutchet—delighted to see you here, sir—first time I've had that pleasure. Been to the Epping Hunt, I hear, my dear Mr. Winter—droll scene, isn't it? But you must use your eyes, my good sir, and look around you. There's the Chamberlain, and that's the prime warden of the Goldsmiths' Company with his wife, and that's the City Remembrancer, with the Comptroller and the two Secondaries, and there's Sir Nathaniel Nash, one of the sheriffs—the other sheriff, Sir John Cartwright, has just gone in." Thus he rattled on, without waiting for a reply.

In another minute the party had arrived at the entrance of a large room on the left of the saloon, which forms an ante-chamber to the principal apartments on this floor. Here a number of persons, who had been presented, were assembled, and here the guests, as they arrived, delivered their titles or names to an usher, who, marching to the door of an inner room, proclaimed them aloud,

and the announcement was again and again repeated, until the presence-chamber was reached.

In the middle of this noble room, arrayed in his full robes, with the collar of SS. round his neck, stood the Lord Mayor, and so full of dignity was his deportment, that even his brother, when he approached him, preceded by the usher, was impressed by it. On his lordship's left stood the Lady Mayoress, in a rich brocade dress, having a stomacher of diamonds and other ornaments. Her head-dress, which, in spite of the royal reproof, again towered aloft, was adorned with pearls, and nodded with ostrich plumes. With her were her two favourite daughters, both of whom were attired with their customary taste and splendour. Indeed, as the Duke of York was expected, Lady Dawes had heightened her charms to the utmost, and really looked very fascinating. However, neither she nor Mrs. Chatteris could compare in point of positive beauty with Milly and Prue; and though they far outshone the younger graces in

splendour of attire, they fell short in the essentials of personal attraction. Though not occupying so prominent a place as the favourites, Milly and Prue formed part, of course, of the Lady Mayoress's entourage. Dressed precisely alike, in white satin ornamented with pearls, they were distinguished by a taste and simplicity that lent them an indescribable charm.

"No ceremony with me, my dear brother," cried the Lord Mayor, holding out both hands to Mr. Winter, and preventing the formal bow which the latter meditated. "No ceremony," he repeated. "Delighted to see you. You must take care of yourself, for I shan't have much time to attend to you till later on in the evening."

"Don't give me a thought, brother," replied Winter. "I shall do very well, I'm sure, and if I should be at a loss for anything, I can apply to Tradescant. Oddsflesh! how well you look," he added, in a lower tone. "It's a very fine thing to be brother to a Lord Mayor, and I feel my-

self of more consequence than I did a short time ago."

"It's a very pleasant thing to have you and Lawrence with me on this occasion, my dear Godfrey," replied the Lord Mayor, "and I can assure you that all the homage I have paid me to-day doesn't yield me half the satisfaction I experience at the sight of you both. And now go to her ladyship, for Crutchet is waiting to be presented."

With this Winter passed on, and made his bow to the Lady Mayoress, who received him very graciously, while his two nieces, who stood near, smiled upon him most sweetly, essaying to make him believe they were enchanted to see him. But they were far too fine ladies to please the plain old gentleman, who abominated affectation and pretension as much as he liked simplicity and modesty, and he was, therefore, very glad to escape from them to his daughter and Milly, of whose sincerity he had no doubt, and whose manner

and appearance yielded him unmitigated satisfaction.

He was still with them when Crutchet came up. As may be supposed, the worthy old fellow had been most kindly received by the Lord Mayor, who did everything he could to set him at his ease, and quite succeeded in doing so; but the next moment the poor fellow's self-satisfaction was destroyed by the Lady Mayoress, who turned away disdainfully as he approached her, not even acknowledging his profound obeisance, while her elder daughters imitated her ladyship's example. He was smarting under this rudeness when he came up to Mr. Winter, who, having noticed the previous occurrence, would not allow him to go on till he had spoken to Prue and Milly, and their amiability and good nature speedily set him right. In another minute Tradescant and Herbert joined them, and then Sir Felix, who had been showering his compliments upon the Lady Mayoress and her two elder daughters, came up,

and was equally fervent in his expressions of admiration of the younger ladies.

Meanwhile, the company was arriving fast, and presentation after presentation took place. After several distinguished personages had been proclaimed by the usher, his Grace the Duke of Newcastle was announced, and the little withered, sharp-featured old peer, richly attired, and wearing the blue riband and star, tottered forward, and made his bow, with the grace of a courtier of George the Second's day, to the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress. Scarcely had Newcastle retired when he was succeeded by the Right Hon. George Grenville, principal secretary of state. Next came the Marquis of Rockingham, chief lord of the bedchamber, and then there were dukes in succession—namely, Devonshire, Bolton, and Portland.

Then came a number of commoners, all of whom were distinguished in some way or other, and amongst whom were our acquaintances, Wilkes,

Tom Potter, Sir William Stanhope, Sir Francis Dashwood, and Sir Thomas Stapleton.

Then came more peers and peeresses, pre-eminent among the latter being the three court beauties whom, earlier in our story, we had the pleasure of introducing as visitors to Guildhall —namely, the Duchess of Richmond and the Countesses of Pembroke and Kildare. All three were superbly attired, and radiant with pearls and precious stones, and still maintained their supremacy for grace and beauty, for no one in that large assemblage—and there were many charming women present—could for a moment compare with them. Three creatures more ravishingly lovely cannot be imagined, and on their appearance all eyes were irresistibly drawn towards them. The Lord Mayor's polite attentions to them at Guildhall on the occasion of their visit, had made a very agreeable impression upon all three, and they showed by their manner how much pleased they were to see him. On his part, Sir Gresham

could not fail to be highly gratified by their presence, and he said so in terms which he could not have employed had not the beauty of his guests called forth his admiration.

"Your lordship has been taking a lesson in the art of compliment from that arch-professor, Sir Felix Bland, since we had last the pleasure of seeing you," said the Duchess of Richmond, smiling; "but we really are more indebted to you than we can express for giving us an opportunity of witnessing another grand civic entertainment. We have a most agreeable recollection of the first, I can assure you."

And the duchess's assurance was confirmed by the smiling looks of her lovely companions.

"I am enchanted to see your grace and their ladyships at the Mansion House," replied the Lord Mayor; "and though I cannot offer you the attractions held out by the presence of their Majesties on the former occasion, nothing shall be wanting on my part to render your visit agreeable, and

evince my sense of the honour, and, I may add, the extreme pleasure you confer upon me."

Acknowledging this speech with a smile that a syren might have envied, the duchess and her companions went on; but though they were received by the Lady Mayoress and her elder daughters with an assiduity amounting to obsequiousness, they were haughty and distant, and the duchess completed the Lady Mayoress's dismay by inquiring who those two very pretty girls were behind her—meaning Milly and Prue—and on being informed, at once addressed them, saying, in the most affable manner, that she felt sure she had seen them before, but couldn't exactly tell where, adding some other complimentary remarks on the improvement in their appearance, extremely gratifying to all who heard them, save, perhaps, to Lady Dawes and Mrs. Chatteris.

While this was passing, other distinguished guests had arrived, the Duke of Manchester, her Majesty's chamberlain; Lord Cantilupe, vice-cham-

berlain; and the Earl of Harcourt, master of the horse. Amongst the peeresses were the Duchesses of Ancaster and Hamilton, and the Countesses of Effingham and Egremont. Next came Lord Sandwich, and then some eminent lawyers; after which a general sensation was created by the arrival of the Earl of Bute, who had just obtained the post he had so long coveted, of first lord of the treasury.

The new prime minister attracted all eyes as he entered the room. Attired, as usual, in black velvet, trimmed with silver, and wearing the blue riband and star, Lord Bute presented a very stately appearance, and, as if conscious of the additional importance he had recently acquired, he advanced very majestically and slowly towards the Lord Mayor, as if expecting his lordship to come forward to meet him. But Sir Gresham did not move, but awaiting the earl's approach, returned his ceremonious bow with a dignity equal to his own. With the prime minister

came his confidant, Lord Melcomb, who had helped him to his present eminent position, and who looked even more self-sufficient and contemptuous than the Favourite.

"I am happy to tell you, my Lord Mayor," observed Bute, "that I have reached the City without molestation. From former experience, I was under some little apprehension of rude treatment on this side of Temple-bar. But I have met with none. Mr. Pitt, I believe, does not dine with your lordship. Perhaps," he added, with some significance, "his absence may account for the quietude of the mob."

"If Mr. Pitt had honoured me with his company, my lord, he might have been cheered on his way hither," rejoined the Lord Mayor, "since it is utterly impossible to repress the enthusiasm my fellow-citizens feel for him. But I am glad to learn from your lordship that they are better able than they were to control their feelings of displeasure."

To this rejoinder, though secretly annoyed by it, Bute didn't deem it advisable to make a reply, but turning to the Lady Mayoress, bowed to her in a stiff and stately manner, while Lord Melcomb shook out a cloud of powder from his enormous periwig, as he bent ceremoniously to Sir Gresham.

A seasonable relief was offered at this moment by the arrival of the royal Dukes, as was proclaimed by the striking up of the national anthem by the military band stationed in the saloon, as well as by the grounding of arms by the guard, the sound of which could be distinctly heard. Whereupon the Lord Mayor, attended by the sheriffs and some of the aldermen, went to meet his royal guests, and encountered them in the vestibule.

The Duke of Cumberland looked somewhat better than he did when he visited Guildhall, but his features were still bloated and distorted, and he walked with difficulty. His speech being slightly affected, it was difficult to make out what he said,

and his gruff tones and sullen manner left it generally doubtful whether he was pleased or the reverse. This was certainly the case on the present occasion, for he put out his hand to the Lord Mayor, and then drew it quickly back as if hurt by the pressure, growling at the same time like a mastiff with a sore paw.

Very different from that of his uncle was the deportment of the Duke of York. Shaking hands heartily with the Lord Mayor, he bowed graciously to the sheriffs and aldermen, and conversed most affably with every one around him. He was magnificently dressed in a coat of gold brocade, turned up with silk, and embroidered with large flowers in silver and colours, and having diamond buttons. His ruffles were of the finest point-lace; and he wore a diamond solitaire, with brilliants at the knee and in his shoes.

Conducting his royal guests to the inner chamber, the Lord Mayor presented them to the Lady Mayoress, and as soon as this ceremony was gone

through, the gallant young Duke addressed himself to Lady Dawes, who was now made supremely happy. Little time, however, was allowed for conversation of any sort, for dinner being announced, the doors communicating with the saloon were thrown open, whereupon the Lord Mayor offered his arm to the Duchess of Richmond, and led her forth.

The Duke of Cumberland followed with the Lady Mayoress, and Lady Dawes, to her infinite delight, fell to the care of the Duke of York.

Before this, all the guests had been informed by the master of the ceremonies and other officials whom they were to take to dinner, and where they were to sit, so that no delay or confusion occurred, but all went according to their degrees, and in the order prescribed. Prue, we may mention, was consigned to Tradescant, and Milly to Herbert; but no lady was allotted to Mr. Winter, a deprivation, we are sorry to say, that did not give him much concern.

Preceded by the trumpeters blowing lively flourishes, by ushers and gentlemen of the household bearing white wands, by the swordbearer and macebearer, the Lord Mayor ushered his guests into the Egyptian Hall, and proceeded towards the upper table at the eastern end of the room.

Besides the elevated table appropriated to the Lord Mayor, his most important guests, and the chief civic dignitaries, three other tables, allotted to the general company, ran down nearly the whole length of the hall. In the midst of the upper table, and opposite the throne-like chairs destined for the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, stood a large silver-gilt plateau, comprising a beautiful group of figures, the chief of which, a very graceful woman, crowned with turrets, and bearing a shield graven with the City arms, was intended to represent the city of London. Besides this splendid centre-piece the whole table was covered with costly dishes, salvers, and flagons, of rare workmanship. On a high beaufet at the back was another

grand display of gilt salvers, plate, and drinking-vessels.

The three lower tables were also handsomely ornamented, though they could not, of course, be compared in point of splendour with the upper. Richly decorated for the occasion, splendidly illuminated by girandoles and lustres dependent from the ceiling, and by candelabra set on the tables, filled with company, the grand banqueting-chamber presented a most imposing coup-d'œil, and as the old squire, who was placed at the upper table, among the illustrious guests, looked down it, noted the immense Corinthian pillars on either side, the decorations, and the superb appointments, he thought he had never beheld so magnificent a sight.

By this time all the principal guests had been marshalled to their places. The two large chairs we have referred to were of course occupied by the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress. On his lordship's left sat the Duchess of Richmond, and

next to her grace was the Duke of York, and beside him Lady Dawes. The Lady Mayoress was supported by the Duke of Cumberland, next to whom sat the Duchess of Ancaster with Lord Bute. All the members of the Lord Mayor's family had places at the upper table, and his two brothers sat together.

Grace having been pronounced by the chaplain, in tones that resounded through the hall, the banquet commenced. It is scarcely necessary to say that the entertainment was of the most sumptuous description, but we may add what Sir Felix Bland declared, that he had never seen anything like it. In fact, it was universally admitted to have been the grandest banquet and the most splendidly served that up to that period had been given in the Mansion House. Every delicacy that could be obtained was set before the guests, and no distinction was made between the upper and lower tables, the latter being served in precisely the same manner as the other. The wine was of the finest vintages, and

poured forth in flowing cups. The old squire enjoyed himself immensely, and did ample justice to the turtle and venison of which he had spoken, while Lawrence, though he could not boast of his brother's appetite, proved himself no despicable trencherman.

In the intervals of the repast, Mr. Winter looked about for Old Bow Bells, and at last discovered him seated near the bottom of the central table, and, managing to catch his eye, raised his glass, and drank to him. The old fellow was in a state of perfect elysium. To him it was a scene of fairy splendour, such as his imagination had not conceived.

Familiar as they had now become with such entertainments, both Tradescant and Herbert were struck by the extraordinary splendour of the banquet; and indeed the universal opinion was that it could not possibly be surpassed. But feasts, however sumptuous they may be, must, like everything else, come to an end, and guests, albeit

insatiable, must, however reluctantly, leave off carousing, and so the Easter Banquet given by our Lord Mayor, though longer than such feasts usually are, was at last brought to a close.

Grace being said, and the Loving Cup having gone round, the health of their Majesties was proclaimed by the crier, and drunk amidst immense cheering. The Duke of York then arose, and in graceful terms proposed the health of the Lord Mayor, whom he highly eulogised for his noble qualities. The toast was rapturously received, and drunk with an enthusiasm rarely witnessed, proving the estimation in which Sir Gresham was held. Hearty and long-continued were the cheers. In acknowledging the distinguished honour paid him, the Lord Mayor, who was deeply moved, spoke briefly and modestly of his own career, showing how he had risen to his present distinction, and proving that a similar path was open to all his fellow-citizens. "I shall not, I am sure," said his lordship, "be misunderstood when I hold myself

up to a younger generation as an example and an encouragement. It is from no feeling of vain-gloriousness that I do so, but from the earnest desire to stimulate them to honourable exertion. I have shown how I have risen. They may rise in like manner. Throughout my career I have discharged my duties to the best of my ability, and have now abundantly reaped my reward. Such manifestations as yours would be enough. But I am proud to be able to declare to this distinguished assemblage that the title I have acquired by no unworthy means will be transmitted to my son, since I have this day received from my gracious sovereign a patent of baronetcy."

With these words he sat down amid the general plaudits of the company.

Other toasts followed, but it will not be necessary to particularise them. It may be mentioned, however, that in speaking of the House of Commons, Mr. Beckford took occasion to refer to the new member for the East Riding, Mr. Winter,

explaining that gentleman's relations to the Lord Mayor. He also alluded to Lawrence Lorimer, and without entering into any details, described how strangely the three brothers had met after so many years' separation. The health of the Lady Mayoress, gracefully proposed by the Duke of York, who contrived to mix up with it many compliments to her daughters, closed the list of toasts; and the Lord Mayor having responded to it, the company arose at a signal from the crier, and adjourned to the ball-room.

IV.

THE BALL.

THE ball-room, a splendid apartment, corresponding in length though not in breadth with the Egyptian Hall, was situated in the upper story. Surrounded by a gallery for spectators, and possessing a large orchestra, it was appropriately adorned with panels representing musical instruments of every variety. On the present occasion it was brilliantly lighted up, festooned with flowers and otherwise decorated, while a cordon of uncoloured lamps ran round the gallery. The floor was chalked with devices in varied colours, and a square space

was preserved for the dancers by means of silken ropes attached to brass rods. Connected with the ball-room was a large and handsomely-furnished withdrawing-room, and to this room, on quitting the Egyptian Hall, the Lord Mayor and his guests repaired. There tea was served; and there the Lady Mayoress received such of the guests as had only been invited to the ball. Very numerous they were, and extremely amusing it was to see so many City beaux and belles tricked out in all their finery.

As may be supposed, the Lady Mayoress, surrounded as she was by great folks, and heartily ashamed of such an addition as this to her party, received them most haughtily, and sometimes even moved her fan impatiently to intimate to them to pass by. But Sir Gresham was as affable as ever, bowing courteously to all, and smiling a welcome when too far off to utter it.

Her ladyship had now no support from her elder daughters, both of whom were otherwise occupied —Lady Dawes with the Duke of York, and Mrs.

Chatteris with Lord Sandwich, who, failing with one sister, had transferred his attentions to the other. But she had much better assistance than they would have afforded in the persons of Milly and Prue, who stood beside her, and by their amiable deportment mitigated in some degree the effect of her rudeness.

Some hundreds of guests had flocked in, and had been subjected to the terrible ordeal of passing the Lady Mayoress, when the usher at the door bawled out the familiar names of Mr., Mrs., and Miss Walworth, and the party came on, not without misgiving as to the reception they should meet with. Strange to relate, the Lady Mayoress was remarkably gracious, and seemed to have quite forgotten her former misunderstanding with them. She graciously saluted Mrs. Walworth, and even shook hands with Alice. Close behind them was a tall, handsome, but somewhat effeminate-looking young man, whom the usher had announced as Mr. Charles Cracraft. As soon as he bowed to

the Lady Mayoress, this gay-looking spark joined Alice, who took his arm.

"There she is, my dear Mr. Winter," cried Sir Felix Bland, who was standing near the old squire; "that's Alice Walworth. What d'ye think of her?"

"Humph!" exclaimed Winter. "She's well enough to look at. But who's that young coxcomb who has just given her his arm?"

"Oh, that's Charley Cracraft," replied Sir Felix.

"Charley Cracraft, is it?" cried Winter. "Then, in my opinion, Alice is likely to be Mrs. Charles Cracraft. What do you think, Herbert?" he added to his son, who was standing by with Tradescant.

"As likely as not," replied the young man, with affected indifference, though it was plain he was piqued. "I'll go and speak to her," he added.

And he was making his way towards that part of the room whither the Walworths had gone,

when he was stopped by Wilkes and Tom Potter, who caught hold of him and detained him.

"That girl will never do for Herbert," said Winter to Tradescant. "I can see that at a glance."

"You are quite right, sir," replied his nephew. "And I hope, before the evening is over, to convince him that he has to do with an arrant coquette, who cares nothing about him."

"I hear what you say," cried Prue. "Come this way, I want to whisper a word to you." And then she added, in an under tone, "Free Herbert from that coquette; bring him to Milly's feet; and you shall fix the wedding-day as soon as you please."

"I'll do my best," he replied; "but you must all help me. "Harkye, Sir Felix," he added, "I want your assistance." And he took the little alderman aside. "I know I can depend upon your friendship," he said.

"That you can, my dear sir—entirely. Anything to prove it."

On this Tradescant whispered a few words in the little alderman's ear, to which Sir Felix replied, "I'll do it, my dear sir. Rely on me."

At this moment the doors of the ball-room were thrown open, and the master of the ceremonies, accompanied by two gentlemen of the household, advanced towards the Lord Mayor. At the same time the military band, which now occupied the orchestra, struck up, enlivening the company with their inspiriting strains.

"Will it please your Royal Highness to dance a minuet?" said the Lord Mayor to the Duke of York.

"Shall I have the supreme felicity, madam?" said the Duke, bowing ceremoniously to Lady Dawes.

"Your Royal Highness does me infinite honour," she replied, dropping a profound curtsey as she gave him her hand.

Preceded by the master of the ceremonies and the other officials the Duke then led her to the ball-room, and as she marched with stately step her mother's eyes followed her with pride and admiration. A good many other female eyes followed her too, but with most of the owners of them she was rather an object of envy than of admiration. After the royal Duke and his charming partner walked Lord Sandwich and Mrs. Chatteris, and they were succeeded by Tradescant and Prue. The greater portion of the company flocked after them quickly, filling all that part of the room outside the reserved space. One of the cords being unhooked by the master of the ceremonies, those about to dance took their places, when two other couples presented themselves, and, as there was plenty of room, were admitted. These, to Tradescant's surprise, proved to be Herbert and Alice, and Mr. Wilkes and Milly. The music then struck up, and the minuet began. The stately dance was admirably executed

by all those engaged in it, and even Wilkes, whose friends drew near the ropes to laugh at him, came off with éclat. Alice Walworth also acquitted herself exceedingly well, and the old squire, who looked on, was obliged to own that she was an uncommonly pretty girl. He fancied, however, from the direction occasionally taken by her glances, that she was displaying her graces to young Cracraft, who was standing just in front of him, near the ropes. At the Guildhall ball it was thought that the best dancers were the Lady Mayoress's elder daughters, but now the palm was universally accorded to her ladyship's youngest daughter and niece, the latter of whom enchanted all the assemblage by her graceful movements.

The minuet was succeeded by a cotillon, in which a great many young persons took part; a jig came next, and then a rigadoon, and after that a Scotch reel. If the beaux of the east were not as polished and well-bred as their rivals of the west,

they were quite as fond as the others of footing it on the light fantastic toe, while the belles of the City, not being worn out by incessant routs, drums, and ridottos, like the languid fair ones of St. James's, compelled their partners to greater exertion. Hence it followed that the Mansion House ball, though comprising, as might be expected, a very mixed assemblage (which to our thinking is by far the pleasantest kind of assemblage), was a very agreeable entertainment, and remarkable for life and spirit. The dancers were indefatigable, and were incited to constant exertion by the Lord Mayor, who was as active as the master of the ceremonies in providing his guests with partners. Kind-hearted Sir Gresham liked, above all things, to see young people happy, and strove by every means in his power to promote their happiness. Thus nothing afforded him more unmixed satisfaction than to witness the gaiety pervading the assemblage. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. If not dancing, they were

laughing and chatting, and nothing but mirth and good humour seemed to prevail. There was no stiffness, no formality, and in this respect the ball differed greatly from a grand entertainment given at the more fashionable quarter of the town, which, though very stately and imposing, would have been the stiffest and dreariest affair imaginable. Attached to the withdrawing-room there were card-rooms, where play was going on, and besides these there were refreshment-rooms, and a supper-room, in which, at twelve o'clock, a magnificent repast was served. As at the previous banquet, the guests were regaled with the choicest delicacies, and the exhausted dancers were reinvigorated by bumpers of champagne. Among those who partook of this splendid supper were young Cracraft and Alice Walworth, and so engrossed were they by each other, that they were wholly unconscious of the looks fixed upon them from the opposite side of the table, where Prue and Milly, with Tradescant and Herbert, were

stationed. Calling her brother's attention to the couple, Prue said to him,

"Surely, Herbert, you cannot be blind to what is going on there! Except the minuet, which she amiably conceded to you, Alice has danced every other dance with Charles Cracraft, and he has never left her for a moment. You see how assiduous he is to her, how he whispers tender speeches in her ear, and how encouragingly she smiles upon him. If you have any engagement with this girl, break it off at once. Her present conduct warrants you in doing so."

"I have no positive engagement with her," he rejoined.

"You have engagement of some kind, I perceive," she rejoined. "You owe it to yourself to put an end to it. See! they are quitting the room together. She has never once cast her eyes this way."

"I'll bring it to an issue at once," said Herbert.

"Either she shall give up young Cracraft, or she shall give up me."

So saying, he started in pursuit, but the crowd was very great, and ere he could get to the other side of the long table, the amorous couple had disappeared. While puzzling himself whither they could have gone, and trying to keep down the angry feelings which prompted him to pick a quarrel with his favoured rival, he perceived Sir Felix, who was evidently making his way towards him, and who, as soon as he came up, said, in a loud voice, "I've found it out, my dear fellow. She won't do."

"If you refer to Alice Walworth, I'm very much of your opinion, Sir Felix," replied Herbert. "But why won't she do? Let me hear?"

"I can't tell you all now, but you may trust to the correctness of my information. You know I recommended Alice to you on the score of her fortune—not entirely, of course, but principally.

A girl with a plum to her fortune is a great catch —I told you so."

"You did; and I agreed with you, Sir Felix. I'm sorry to say the plum proved a lure I couldn't resist."

"Then between ourselves, my dear fellow, it's all a flam. Old Walworth can't give her a plum —not half the amount—not a fourth. Perhaps he may come down with a thousand. But that's the utmost. Will you take her with a thousand?"

"Not with a hundred thousand, as originally proposed," cried Herbert.

"Delighted to hear you say so!" exclaimed the little alderman, chuckling. "Let Charley Cracraft have her. She'll do very well for him."

"Where the deuce is she?" cried Herbert. "I must settle this matter at once."

"Ay, ay, the sooner the better," exclaimed Sir Felix, eagerly. "Let's go and look for them. We shall find them in some retired nook, I'll be

sworn—billing and cooing like a couple of turtles —he! he! he!"

With this, Herbert and the little alderman quitted the supper-room, and as they were proceeding towards some of the smaller apartments, they encountered Wilkes and Tom Potter, of whom Sir Felix at once inquired whether they had seen anything of Alice Walworth.

"Seen her! yes, and in very good company, too," cried Wilkes, with a laugh. "She is gone into that room on the right—there—beyond the card-room. Tom Potter and I were there when the pair entered, but we soon perceived we were de trop, and discreetly left them to themselves."

"Yes, we didn't like to spoil sport," laughed Potter.

"Harkye, Herbert," said Wilkes. "I know. you've been thinking of that girl of late, but I've too much friendship for you to allow you to throw yourself away upon her without remonstrance.

Take my word for it, she's a coquette, and will make you miserable. Have done with her at once."

"I give you the same advice," said Potter. "Marry her, and your fate is sealed!"

"If you want to marry, I'll point out to you the most charming person in the world," pursued Wilkes, "to whose merits you seem most unaccountably blind. I mean your cousin Milly. That's the girl to make you happy."

"I'm sure she is," cried Sir Felix; "and a good fortune, too."

"Hang the fortune!" cried Wilkes. "The girl is a treasure in herself, and such as doesn't fall to every man's lot to possess. But I'll tell you more, she loves you."

"Loves me!" exclaimed Herbert. "How do you know that?"

"You shall hear," replied Wilkes. "A friend of mine, whose name I won't mention, made her an offer of his hand—not an hour ago—and she replied that her affections were already engaged,

and your sister afterwards told my friend that you were the fortunate individual."

"Be off with the old love before you be on with the new," laughed Tom Potter. "First get rid of Alice."

"Ay, if I could only satisfy myself of her inconstancy, I should have no hesitation."

"You have had proof enough to satisfy most people," said Wilkes; "but if you require evidence still stronger, I'll show you how to obtain it. Come with me."

And he entered the card-room, followed by the others. Here, somewhat to Herbert's surprise, he found the Lord Mayor, who was standing near a card-table, at which four persons were seated, playing whist—the players being no other than his own father, his uncle Lawrence, Mr. Beckford, and Crutchet. No other person was in the room at the time. Sir Gresham, who appeared very much interested in the game, merely nodded to the party as they entered.

Signing to Herbert to follow him, Wilkes stepped towards a side-door, evidently communicating with a room beyond, and opened it softly. It then appeared that a screen was so placed in the inner room, that any one standing where he and Herbert now did, could hear what passed, without being themselves perceived. Subdued and tender accents were heard; and Herbert, though he could not see the speakers, who were seated on a couch on the other side of the screen, instantly recognised the voices. Fearing the young man might betray himself by some exclamation, Wilkes raised his finger to his lips to enjoin silence.

Herbert had arrived at a critical moment. Not only did it appear that the impassioned swain had extorted from his mistress's lips an avowal that she loved him, but he was now questioning her as to the state of her feelings towards Herbert himself, of whom he was apparently jealous.

"Then you positively assure me you don't care for him?" he cried.

"I protest I don't," she replied. "This is the twentieth time I've told you so. I certainly liked him a little, and, if you had not appeared, might have yielded to his importunities, and married him."

"Then there is no sort of engagement between you?" demanded the lover.

"None that I regard as binding," she replied. "It is true he gave me this ring as a pledge of his fidelity."

"Why not return it to him?" inquired the lover.

"I mean to do so on the first opportunity," she replied. "I see you doubt me. Why, you are more stupidly jealous than Herbert himself. There, take the ring. Do what you please with it. I neither care for it, nor for the donor."

"Thanks! thanks! my angel!" cried the inamorato, evidently from the sound covering her hand with kisses.

"Have you heard enough?" whispered Wilkes.

"Quite," replied Herbert. "Ahem!" And he coughed aloud.

The sound startled the amorous pair.

"Some one is listening—behind the screen," cried Alice, in alarm.

"I'll see who it is," said her lover. And pulling back the screen he disclosed Herbert and Wilkes, the latter of whom burst into a loud laugh, which was echoed by Tom Potter and Sir Felix, who were close behind him.

"Oh! Heavens! support me, or I shall faint!" exclaimed Alice.

"Don't trouble yourself to do that," rejoined Herbert. "You will only inconvenience Mr. Cracraft."

"Have you been there all the time?" she demanded.

"I have been here quite long enough to hear your candid opinion of myself, and the preference you avow for Mr. Cracraft," replied Herbert. "I congratulate him on the prize he has won. He

may rest assured he will find no obstacle in me. All is at an end between us, madam."

"At least, take back your ring, Herbert!" she cried.

"No; let your lover keep it," he rejoined.

"Are these the last words we are to exchange?" she cried.

"The last," he replied, retiring and closing the door upon the pair.

What was his surprise to find, on turning round, that the company in the room had been increased, not only by Tradescant, Milly, and Prue, but also by the Lady Mayoress and her two elder daughters.

"Well, brother," cried Prue, advancing towards him. "Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly satisfied that I have been a fool," he replied. "You must laugh at me and despise me, cousin," he added to Milly.

"No," she replied, "I won't laugh at you, but I can't pity you, for you have had a great escape."

"That indeed he has," said Prue.

"Oddsflesh!" exclaimed Winter, pushing forward. "If he had married that girl I'd have disinherited him."

"But you wish me to marry, sir," responded Herbert.

"Ay, but not a coquette. I wish you to marry a quiet, amiable girl, calculated to make you happy, and your home respectable—who will bring up your family well—if you have any."

"Such good qualities are concentred in one person of my acquaintance," said Herbert. "My cousin Milly unites them all, and if she will consent to be mine, my future happiness and respectability will be ensured."

"How came you not to have discovered Milly's good qualities before this, sirrah?" cried the squire.

"My blindness is as inexplicable to myself as it can be to you, sir," replied his son. "I can offer nothing in my defence. But my eyes are wide enough open now. Your answer, cousin?"

"You must have been very blind if you did not find out long ago that you possessed my heart," said Milly, giving him her hand, which he pressed to his lips.

"Well, don't scold him any more," said Prue, "for I see he's heartily ashamed of himself—as indeed he may well be. Though he has been but a stupid lover, I venture to predict he'll make a tolerable husband. My dearest wish is now accomplished. I had set my heart upon this union."

"Don't forget that another marriage is dependent upon it, Prue?" said Tradescant.

"I never break my promises," she replied. "On the same day that Herbert and Milly are made one, and at the same church, too, you and I will be bound by chains indissoluble—if such be your good pleasure!"

"If such be my pleasure, Prue! You know that my life's happiness hangs on that event."

"Then it is for me to fix the day," said the Lord

Mayor, "and as delays are dangerous in such affairs, I shall name an early one."

"Stay, stay, good folks!" interposed the Lady Mayoress. "You are going rather too fast, methinks. My consent has never been asked, either by son or daughter."

"I won't pretend to say that I have been consulted, madam," observed the Lord Mayor; "but both marriages are so perfectly agreeable to me, that, as an Irishman might say, my consent is given before it is asked. And I trust your feelings are the same, for I'm sure you can raise no objections."

"No, I don't mean to say that I shall object," said the Lady Mayoress, "quite the contrary. But there are proprieties which ought never to be neglected—and I think there has been a decided want of attention to me—on all sides. However, let that pass. I never looked for anything extraordinary for Milly, and she marries better than I expected. I wish her all happiness

—and her husband too. She will do very well, I dare say, in the country—better than in town. I had formed other views for Tradescant, but he has disappointed me of late, and therefore I had no right to raise my expectations too high. I have no doubt he has chosen well, and, at all events, I shall reconcile myself to the marriage."

"I shan't express any opinion upon either marriage," said Lady Dawes.

"Neither shall I," added Mrs. Chatteris. "I wonder what my poor dear Tom would say if he were here," she murmured.

"Oddsflesh! madam," said Winter to the Lady Mayoress, "you must be hard to please if you're not content with the proposed family arrangement. Prue has been an excellent daughter—an excellent daughter, madam, and I'll answer for it will make your son an excellent wife. And as to Milly, all I can say is she deserves a better husband than Herbert."

"Oh, don't say that, uncle," cried Milly.

"Well, perhaps I do him an injustice," said the squire. "The lad has his good points, and I trust will make you happy."

"I shall strive to do so," said Herbert.

"What say you, brother?" observed the Lord Mayor to Lawrence.

"Ay, what say you, Lorry?" demanded the old squire. "Are you in favour of this double marriage?"

"Heartily," he replied. "I have long hoped both unions might come about, and have furthered them to the utmost of my power."

"And as an old friend," remarked Beckford, "let me say that I look upon both marriages as most auspicious."

"It would be an impertinence in me to make any remark," observed Wilkes, "or I should say that both Tradescant and Herbert are particularly fortunate fellows, and I don't know which of the two is most to be envied."

"Impossible to decide that point," added Tom Potter.

"As an old and faithful servant of the family," observed Crutchet, in a voice of deep emotion, "and as loving Mr. Tradescant as dearly as a son, let me say how sincerely I rejoice that he will be blest with so good a wife. I know her value. There are few like her, or, if there is any one like her, it's Miss Milly. May Heaven bless the double union!"

"Well said, Old Bow Bells," exclaimed Winter. I cry 'Amen' to that prayer with all my heart."

"Since both marriages are agreed on, I trust, sir, you will name an early day for their celebration," said Tradescant to his father.

"Ay, ay, put 'em out of misery quickly, brother, I beg of you," said the old squire.

"I was about to do so, but was interrupted," said the Lord Mayor. "The marriages shall take place on this day week. Will that day suit your ladyship?"

"Don't appeal to me, Sir Gresham," rejoined the Lady Mayoress. "Any day will suit me."

"Pray let the ceremonies take place at Bow Church?" said Crutchet.

"Ay, we must hear Bow bells ring on that day," laughed Winter.

"It shall be so," said the Lord Mayor; "and Cheapside shall see such a wedding—two such weddings, I ought to say—as it has rarely witnessed. Mind, you are all invited."

"And we'll come, depend upon it, my lord," replied Wilkes.

And now, since we have arrived at the point at which a genteel comedy generally concludes, let us crave the indulgence of a good-humoured audience, and make our bow as the curtain falls.

Epilogue.

We raise the curtain for a moment, to exhibit our actors in a different scene.

The auspicious day on which the two weddings are to take place has arrived. The weather is most propitious. Everything wears a bright, sunshiny aspect, that seems to augur well for those chiefly concerned in the solemnities about to take place. Crowds are assembled near the Mansion House, before which the Lord Mayor's splendid private carriage is drawn up, with the great Mr. Keck in his state-livery on the box, and four grand footmen behind it. Here, also, is the Lady

Mayoress's sumptuously appointed chariot, and several other superb vehicles besides.

But not only is there a great crowd here, but the street is thronged all the way from the Mansion House to Bow Church. The windows and balconies of all the houses in this part of Cheapside are filled with well-dressed spectators. It is quite a gala-day.

Near the Mansion House and farther on, at intervals, a few peace-officers are assembled, but the concourse, great as it is, is so orderly and decorous, that the presence of these functionaries seems almost superfluous. From the gladsome expression of the countenances it is easy to discern that but one sentiment pervades the assemblage, namely, that of rejoicing in the events about to take place, coupled with an earnest desire to evince respect for the worthy Lord Mayor. His honoured name is on every lip, and it is almost a pity he cannot hear all the kind things said of him, and

the sincere good wishes uttered for the happiness of his family.

Certes, this double marriage will be a grand affair, for now the sheriffs drive up in their gorgeous chariots; next come the aldermen, the foremost among them being Sir Felix Bland and Mr. Beckford; then comes the Prime Warden of the Merchant Tailors' Company; with other carriages containing important civic dignitaries.

And now a jocund train, all clad in gay attire, issues from the grand portal of the Mansion House, and while descending the lofty steps, can be fully viewed by the vast concourse. First of all comes a bevy of bridesmaids, several of them distinguished for personal attraction, escorted by the groomsmen one of whom is Sir William Stanhope, and the other Mr. Thomas Potter.

Then come the two bridegrooms, both of whom present a very gallant appearance in their wedding habiliments; the Lord Mayor, leading his younger

daughter, arrayed in bridal attire, and then follows the old squire, conducting Prue, who is attired in precisely the same manner as Milly. So far as can be discerned both brides look charming.

Then comes the Lady Mayoress, who is quite a show in herself, so splendid are her dress and headdress, and with her ladyship are her two elder daughters, in dresses calculated, from their richness and elegance, to excite the envy of the female beholders. Then come several gentlemen, amongst whom we notice Lawrence Lorimer and old Crutchet—the latter looking the picture of happiness.

Ushers, bearing white wands, march in advance of the bridal train, and gentlemen of the household bring up the rear.

And now the bridesmaids have driven off, and the groomsmen, and the bridegrooms, the first bride is placed in the Lord Mayor's carriage by her father, and the tall footmen climb to their

places, and Mr. Keck puts his splendid horses in motion.

Another carriage soon follows, containing the second bride and her good old father, whose ruddy countenance beams with satisfaction. Next comes the Lady Mayoress's gorgeous chariot, succeeded by a long procession of carriages, containing the chief civic dignitaries, not one of whom but is anxious to be present on the occasion.

Impossible to describe the enthusiasm of the concourse as the Lord Mayor passes slowly along. Cheers are given to him, and heartfelt blessings invoked on the head of his lovely daughter. As the Lord Mayor's niece, the second bride, is scarcely less an object of interest than the first, and Prue's amiable looks prepossess all in her favour. "She has a sweet face," is the general exclamation. And sweetness is really the character of her beauty. Her father, too, comes in for a share of the popular good will. Many

think him personally like the Lord Mayor, and all are struck by the genial good humonr of his countenance.

Amid a universal manifestation of regard, such as is rarely shown even towards the most exalted personages, the Lord Mayor and his daughter reach Bow Church, the approach to which is kept clear, though the crowd is packed densely on the opposite side of the street, and every window of the adjoining habitations is occupied.

Around the church door are grouped an immense number of civic officials, among whom are the Lord Mayor's beadles in their full dresses, with stavesmen, and watermen.

Alighting, the Lord Mayor and his daughter are ceremoniously conducted by gentlemen of the household in full dress, ushers, and other officers of the household, towards the altar, where the bridesmaids are grouped, and where the two bridegrooms, with the groomsmen, are waiting.

Close behind the first bridal party come the second, and after them marches the Lady Mayoress, with stately step. Excepting the pews reserved for the civic dignitaries, the entire body of the spacious old church is full, and even the galleries are occupied.

A brief delay occurs, to allow the entrance of the numerous important personages forming the procession, but at last they have all taken their places and the marriage rites commence, the service being performed by the Rev. Dr. Dugdale, of Christ Church, assisted by the Lord Mayor's chaplain, Dr. Dipple.

The assemblage at the altar forms a very charming picture. Rarely have four persons stood together more richly endowed by nature than these two youthful couples. Well matched also are their sires, both of whom, as we know, are right goodly men.

A pretty sight it is to see the two brides given

away, but indeed the whole ceremony is interesting. Amongst those who witness it, no one is so much pleased as Crutchet. Rapture, indeed, can alone describe his feelings, and before the ceremony is over his full heart finds vent in tears.

Another person is profoundly moved, though in a different way. This is Uncle Lorry, as he is now generally called, and who, taking the most affectionate interest in his nephews and nieces, loving them as dearly as if they were children of his own, lowly murmurs a benediction on their heads as they kneel before the altar.

The scene and place are both calculated to awaken memories of the past within good Sir Gresham's breast. Here he himself was united to the sole object of his affections, and though his married life has not been all he then fondly hoped it might prove, he has been tolerably happy—as happy, he tries to persuade himself, as most men are.

What emotions stir the Lady Mayoress's breast on the occasion we shall not pause to inquire.

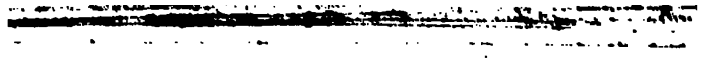
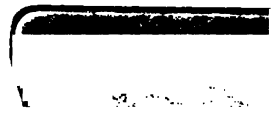
The wedding breakfast is not given at the Mansion House, but at the Lord Mayor's private residence in Cheapside. Thither the two newly-married couples repair after the ceremony, amid the shouts of the concourse, still thronging the street, above which resound joyous peals from Bow Church bells that gladden the honest heart of old Crutchet.

Thither come all the wedding guests, and though the party, as we know, is large, room is found for all at the ample and well-provided table.

The breakfast is worthy of such nuptials—worthy of Sir Gresham's princely hospitality. All that is left of the sumptuous repast is bestowed on the poor. Health and happiness are drunk to the two couples, and earnest are the wishes accompanying the toast. But every glass is emptied,

and loud and long are the cheers as Mr. Beckford, in terms bespeaking his heartiness and sincerity, proposes health, long life, and continued prosperity to

THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON!

THE END.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.